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Capital, Identities and Strategies for Success: explorations of the perspectives of Polish migrant mothers on their children's education in the UK

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I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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Abstract

Children's education is one of the major concerns in family migration. The rapid increase in Polish migration to Britain since 2004 has brought many Polish children into British schools. They bring specific issues arising from a dissimilar educational system in Poland, from parental experiences back in Poland and consequently from different expectations. This thesis looks at emerging patterns in how Polish mothers see the relationship between their home and their children's school culture and between their home and the ethos of the neighbourhoods where they live. By exposing the adaptation processes of Polish children in English schools from the perspective of their mothers, I am exploring the mothers' identity transformations and strategies which they use to negotiate their children's well-being and educational prospects with having to enter, sometimes uncomfortably, unfamiliar relationships and spaces.

Via delving into these experiences it was possible to explore how various forms of capital affect Polish integration into the UK and how capital formation takes place in migratory circumstances. Based on 50 in-depth interviews carried out primarily in London, I have described processes, both social and emotional, accompanying the mothers' journey to integration into the British society.

This study also examines how the migrant mothers' aspirations and tactics shape their children's futures according to the mothers' self-ascribed class identity and how families differ in capitalizing upon the host country's meritocratic opportunities. It is tentatively suggested here that the capital, which Polish mothers carry (from Poland) and deploy, causes them to perceive the English educational system in a particular light and may help their children to successfully function in the schooling world in the UK.[1]

Key words: capital, children, social class, education, habitus, identity, integration, liminality, London, meritocracy, migrants, mothers, opportunities, Polish, schools, strategies, transformation, transgression, UK

[1] For an abstract in Polish refer to Appendix XII

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PART I

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

This work is about Polish migrant mothers in the UK and it is about education, with the emphasis on the education of their children. During several years of research on this topic I found various patterns falling into place and the further I went, the more consistent those results became. The more I delved into the subject, the more I realized that many of my participants' perceptions, attitudes and behaviours were collectivist and closely related to their upbringing in a particular political regime, namely the Polish communist regime.

Writing this thesis has been a very particular journey for me. Writing about phenomena that have been surrounding me for the last several years has, on the one hand, been very useful for gathering ideas for this work, but on the other, tricky when it came to separating my own experiences and opinions from the analysis of the data gathered in the interviews. I am an outsider but also an insider. Outsider to the British educational system, culture and 'English' socialization, but insider, because I am Polish, I have two school age children and I am experiencing the researched phenomena in a similar fashion to my participants. I have so many times been shocked, rejected, hurt, discriminated against and positively surprised in the realms of my children's schooling. I could identify with so many voices of my respondents when listening to their stories. I have suffered from and laughed at similar things. I quickly realized that I share with my respondents a Polish, and perhaps even more broadly East-European view on many of the issues regarding education.

Naïve in the beginning, I used to write letters to the teacher demanding explanations about what the children were learning at school, asking for timetables, for course books and questioning how I could help my child while not knowing what he was learning. Once a week my son would be given flimsy photocopied sheets of tasks, which he would duly fill in but which I subsequently put in the bin not realizing that it should be returned to the teacher until he asked me why I was not returning his homework to school. Initially I would be outraged to hear

that every time when my child was supposed to have a PE lesson, there was something 'more important' to do such as assembly or going to chapel or that for his PE session his class teacher would put music on and children would be dancing to it in their uniforms. But with time I accepted and become more tolerant of something, which I considered as enormous inadequacy or deficiency in the beginning. Bearing in mind that in Poland children carry sets of books and workbooks, get homework every day and have three PE sessions per week, it was all a big change which I found challenging to adjust to. Only later I learnt from my research participants that children are grouped into ability sets, sit at different tables and get different homework. My first reaction to this discovery was 'how will those children who fell behind for some reason, ever catch up with the rest who are now advantaged and academically ahead?' In Poland they would be getting more work to finish at home rather than less and would be given booster classes to bring them alongside their friends. Here they seem to be streamed already at the age of 3 in their nursery when they join different literacy and numeracy groups.

Clearly, it is not only Polish mothers experiencing those phenomena with bewilderment and revolt, but being Polish adds a certain degree of innocence and naivety; Polish mothers have never experienced this to such extremes. My aim therefore is, in part to capture and express their 'voice' and thus to try to describe patterns of similarities and differences between them in order to expose and explain what they find perplexing or unfair in the British educational system. I do hope that this research contributes to the body of literature which influences debates and future policy making, hopefully to improve the currently very polarized British educational system. It is meant to be a worthwhile contribution to understanding migrants' disbelief, struggles and acceptance of the reigning rules of the host society. It is also an anthropological gaze into educational practices taken for granted in British society; it is a gaze of mothers who take education as a means for social mobility seriously, and who expose that rhetoric of equal opportunities is flawed with policies, which lead, sometimes inadvertently, to increase in disparities in educational achievement across the society. It reveals that there may be different ways of organising life and that the truths that for some appear so fair and unquestionable may in fact be seen as unreasonable or discriminatory for others. It is a tale of stark social contrasts and educational segregation, but also the story of rationalization and legitimization of inequalities and of learning to accept the world of competition and unequal chances.

Although Polish migration to the UK is not a new phenomenon and I shall deal with the history of Polish migration in further sections of this introductory chapter, it is important to bear in mind that this thesis focuses on those women-mothers, whose educational participation fell in the period of Communist rule in Poland and in that of transition to free market, while the majority emigrated in the late 90s and early 2000. The mothers' upbringing in Polish post-war ideologies has had a major role in how the respondents position themselves in a contrasting political regime and how their cultural and social capital impacts on their understanding and judgment of schooling in the UK.

It should be clear by now that this project investigates the issues of education and parental aspirations for children. It also intersects discourses about class, however complex the notion proved to be in the context of migration. Those complexities and uncertainties of the participants' own class, in a new setting, are encompassing, as will be shown, issues of disempowerment, inequality, educational elitism and of subtle symbolic violence as experienced by newly arrived or as well as settled Polish mothers. This research, I tentatively claim, is distinct from the works that have been published dealing with the problematic of Polish migration and education in the UK. The existing up-to-date research addressed several issues. First, children's education as a significant decision factor in migrating/returning is analyzed (Garapich & Drinkwater, 2015; McGhee, Heath and Trevena, 2012; Ryan and Sales, 2011; Ryan & Sales, 2013; White, 2011). Second, authors have explored challenges and opportunities of integration of Polish children in British schools (Flynn, 2013; Lopez Rodriguez, Sales, Ryan & D'Angelo, 2010; ibid., 2010a; Moskal, 2010; ibid., 2014; ibid., 2016; Sales, Ryan, Lopez Rodriguez & D'Angelo, 2008). Third, social networks as, directly or indirectly, having an impact on educational experiences and vice versa (Ryan, Sales, Tilki & Siara, 2007; ibid., 2008; ibid., 2009) and last, educational experiences and aspirations of young (age 12-16) Polish migrants (Moskal, 2014; Oland, 2009) were also examined.

In this project I aimed at examining testimonies of Polish migrant mothers in relation to the quandaries of educating their children in a culturally and socially alien environment. Also, it analyses how the mothers conceptualize and tackle English schooling and education, based on their exposure to a theoretically more egalitarian system in Poland. Although papers exist which look at the impact of individuals' formation in the realities of post-war Poland on migrant conduct (Burrell, 2006; ibid., 2009; Rabikowska, 2009; Galasinska, 2010;

Galasińska and Kozłowska, 2009; Uffellmann and Rostek, 2011), there have not been any endeavours to link this legacy with the educational dispositions and leanings of Polish migrants in the UK. On that account, this in-depth qualitative study was needed to explain mothers' vexations and endeavours in regard to their children's educational trajectories. In the next part I set the scene for my thesis and bring into perspective different aspects of Polish migration.

1.1 Setting the scene

Although there were traces of Polish migration to the UK earlier (mainly religious refugees, ex-soldiers or political activists) (Trevena, 2009), Polish migration to the UK came in two major waves which were separated by less defined periods of influx. The first major flow took place during the second world war and post-war periods, mainly around 1945, and by 1945 the total number of Poles in the UK had grown to 249,000. Soldiers and civilians also continued to arrive in the UK during the post-war decade, establishing the well-known Polish diaspora in the UK. They were political refugees who did not wish to return to Poland (Zubrzycki, 1956). The second and largest of all influxes occurred following Poland's accession to the EU when the UK opened its labour market to Poles (mainly between 2004 and 2008). Post accession Polish migration was the most intensive population flow in contemporary European history far outstripping the majority of earlier influxes. As a consequence, Polish presence in Britain has been and still is widely discussed both in academia and media. Although the peak of those discussions has passed – some Poles returned to Poland, fewer are arriving in the UK and the majority are gradually blending into British society – the presence of migrant Poles is nonetheless still a prominent feature of UK life.

Until the collapse of the communist regime in Poland in 1989 only a limited number of Poles emigrated to the UK and they consisted mainly of families and relatives sporadically joining post-war émigrés, political refugees of 1968, and thousands of dissidents leaving the country during the imposition of martial law in 1981 (Garapich, 2007). Although restrictions concerning travelling abroad changed over time, travelling from communist Poland was normally a complicated process, involving visas, invitations, foreign currency possession and strict border crossing policies. Western states (including the UK) offered residency to many of those who were successful in crossing the border and determined to

stay; particularly during the martial law period (1981-1983), when some countries decided not to expel Polish citizens against their will (Kozlowska, 2010). Prior to 2004, the year when the UK opened its borders to Polish citizens, migration was transient, irregular, short-term or circular. It mainly involved student population, invisible because illegal employment and individuals in possession of short-term tourists visas.

In the nineties, Polish migration increased by about forty percent above the annual average of the previous decade (Morawska, 2001). Between fifteen to thirty five thousand people were migrating annually (Morawska, 2001). According to Kozlowska (2010), this trend can be explained by the disillusionment that set in at the beginning of the 1990s, with the realisation that the transformation of Poland could not happen immediately but might take much longer than anticipated. Ziółkowski (2000) explained this trend as the impatience of society wanting quick improvement. Hence the reasons for migrating in this period were mostly economic (Düvell, 2004; Morawska, 1999) when Poles who, as a rule, circulated between the UK and Poland could accumulate significant funds, due to the favourable currency exchange and so improve their material status in Poland. Düvell and Jordan called the Polish illegal migrants of this period, pioneers of the free European labour market (2002). Those economic migrants came from diverse social classes but after 2004 they were predominantly working class. They sought a better life and frequently decided to settle in the UK. The move was partly a response to the deteriorating economic conditions in Poland, for instance in 2003 the national unemployment rate in Poland was 19.4% and reaching 30% in certain regions, (GUS, 2008)[2].

The enlargement of the European Union in 2004 caused changes in the migration pattern of Polish citizens. Three countries of the EU opened their employment market to Poles: Sweden, the UK and Ireland. Accordingly, the climate was favourable for migration. There were labour shortages in the UK (the unemployment rate in 2004 was only 5%) (ONS, 2008), Poles could join the labour market without restrictions and, according to WRS registration figures, between May 2004 and March 2009, 625.000 applied for to be registered. Registration was a condition for being able to work freely in the UK. Many regard those figures underestimated. It was one of the most rapid and intense flows in contem-

[2] Data from the GUS (Glowny Urzad Statystyczny) Central Statistical Office of Poland (http://stat.gov.pl/en/)

porary Europe (Fihel, Kaczmarczyk & Okolski, 2006) and the largest inflow of Polish migrants in UK's history (Garapich & Drinkwater, 2015). Pollard, Latorre and Sriskandarajah (2008) puts it forward as one of the most important social and economic phenomena shaping today's UK and as changing the character of migrations so far. The majority of migrants were in their 'mating stage' (Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk, 2000) aged between 18 and 34, single, career-minded and ready to take risks. Only eighteen percent were aged over 34. Seven percent brought dependants with them (Drinkwater, Eade & Garapich, 2006).

Yet, together with a decline in the number of Polish arrivals in the UK (due to Poland's sustainable economic growth and stronger 'zloty'), from 2008 a significant number began to return to their homeland. According to the 2009 Accession Monitoring Report, fewer Poles migrated in the first half of 2007 than in the same period in 2006. The British Polish Chamber of Commerce, in 2007 launched a campaign 'Come Back to Poland' to encourage Poles living and working in the UK to return home. Labour shortages in sectors such as construction, IT and financial services in Poland have also played a role in reducing the influx of Poles to the UK (Pollard et al., 2008). Many of the returns turned out to be 'failed returns'; Poles now perceived post-communist Poland's characteristics (i.e. regional inequality, job insecurity, low social trust) as hard to accept and cope with and consequently were (re)returning to the UK (White, 2013).

The flow of Poles into the UK increased considerably after Poland became a member of the EU on 1st May 2004. Prior to that date, Polish immigrants were mainly single persons coming for short-term work. After 1/5/2004, Polish citizens had the legal right to reside and work in the UK. The migration of single persons had a diverse character (short-term work arranged via networks, studying, joining partners met previously or via internet, visiting relatives or friends), whereas post-EU accession Polish family migration seems to have had a relatively homogenous pattern. It was usually the father (occasionally mother) who migrated first and built a 'nest' for the rest of the family who followed, usually a few months or years later. The mother (or father) sometimes travelled with their children, if they were young or by herself, as a rule, leaving the teenage children behind with grandparents or relatives. In most cases the particular destination was dictated by personal networks formed earlier in Poland (White, 2011). Even if immigration was intended to be a short term measure to solve economic difficulties faced in Poland, as soon as children's schooling is involved it becomes a

point of reference or a constraint when it comes to any tangible plans of returning to Poland (Garapich and Drinkwater, 2015; Ryan et al., 2008; Trevena, 2012). According to the LFS[3], it is estimated that in 2007 there were around 170, 000 Polish young people (i.e. below the age of 18) in the UK. Various sources have indicated the growing number of children among the Polish migrant population. [4]

The group of Poles immigrating into the UK after the collapse of the communist regime in Poland in 1989 is the subject of this research. Only one mother arrived prior to 1989.

In the new global economic system with its fast spread of information and increasingly efficient transport and communication, migrant workers acquired a strong cultural ability to form transnational networks and diasporas, which frequently are the core source of mobilization, resources and inspiration. The number of newcomers resulting from this globalization challenge has overwhelmed British provision of services. Considerable pressure was placed by Polish arrivals on medical, educational and legal services. This has been frequently reflected in the media. Polish migrants are usually in low skilled jobs (often despite high levels of education) (Drinkwater et al. 2006) and residing in poor quality housing, inappropriate to their needs in terms of size by British standards (McGhee et al., 2012; ibid., 2013). Rents in the private sector are too expensive for Polish migrants' low earnings and make it necessary for them to share accommodation. This applies not only to single persons sharing, but also to several families sharing one house or flat (Parutis, 2011).

The different waves of migration are relevant to this study as they highlight a pattern of integration within the host society of each of those groups. Eade, Drinkwater and Garapich (2007) observed that in the post-accession conditions of migration, a new order became prevalent among Polish migrants. Four types of post-communist migrants were identified: stork, hamster, searcher, and stayer. They are defined on the basis of migration strategy, settlement and the capacity of involvement in transnational activities. Storks (agricultural workers from little

[3] The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a quarterly sample survey of households living at private addresses in Great Britain.

[4] According to DCSF, Polish was the most commonly spoken language among non-English speaking newly arrived migrant school children across England (Pollard et al. 2008). There was also a rapid growth in the number of births of Polish citizens in the UK from 924 in 2001 to 13,339 in 2007.

towns or villages or students) have a family in Poland and come to the UK for a limited, usually defined period. Engaged in low paid employment they do not attempt to develop international networks or transcend beyond the comfort of their Polish zones. The hamsters' main goal is to generate income and return home. They stay abroad longer than storks and their migration is not circular. Searchers leave their options open – settling in the UK, returning or moving somewhere else and for this group, (they are usually young, individualistic and ambitious), a visit to Britain serves as a means to increase social and economic capital. They are willing to undertake either manual or professional jobs. Finally, stayers intend to settle down in Britain permanently and wish to establish a position in British society.

Yet, establishing a position is not equal to social integration with the receiving society. It is rather a tiresome game of searching for suitable niches, juggling miscellaneous social and ethnic relations, of hybridisation of values and of maintaining one's social, cultural and economic status without having to surrender identity. Although the concept of 'stayers' is unquestionably fluid, it is this group which is the focus of this research. They may be relative stayers in that they do not intend to stay long or stay longer than intended. The aforementioned categories of migrants may enter common spaces and interact with one another; however, those groups are frequently divided by their own distinct preoccupations, ambitions and migratory strategies. Fomina (2009: 1) discusses 'parallel worlds' of Poles in Bradford. 'Educated, upwardly mobile, confident Poles' constitute one world while there is also another world of less successful, socially immobile migrants. Olszewska emphasises heterogeneity of Polish migrants (in Ireland) and examines transgressions of cultural and national identities among the 'elite' with global aspirations (2015). Kusek points to a stark polarisation between different social classes of Poles in the UK (2015).

Social relationships between Poles and the host society are an under-researched area. The few studies touching upon the subject found that the majority of post-accession migrants, regardless of gender, spent time with either compatriots or other nationals, but seldom interacted with British people (De Lima, Jenstch & Whelton, 2005; Ryan et al., 2008; Spencer, Ruhs, Anderson & Rogaly, 2007). The latter relationship is characterised by 'disconnection' (O'Brien & Tribe, 2013) and put down to the aloofness of British people as defined by Poles.

Before EU enlargement in May 2004, migration from Poland (much of it undocumented), tended to be perceived as short term, transient, and individual (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2005; Morokvasic, 2004) and as either having no dependents or leaving them behind in Poland. The EU enlargement thus introduced a crucial transition into migratory strategies and has opened a new range of opportunities and challenges for Polish migrants (Ryan, 2011). Although many Polish migrants are hesitant about their long-term plans, EU accession has had a complex implication for their migratory tactics and aspirations, including the educational sphere. On the one hand, opening up legal access to the labour market in Britain at a time when Poles were allowed to travel freely, facilitated ' commuter migration' but on the other hand EU citizenship and the rights attached to it promoted a sense of belonging and encouraged a more permanent settlement and heightened expectations of exercising privileges (Sales et al., 2008). A large survey in 2006 suggested that a significant proportion planned long-term or indefinite stays (Cronem, 2006) while research from 2008 carried out for IPPR (Institute of Public Policy Research) pointed out that although return migration was increasing as the Polish economy improved, substantial numbers plan to remain long term and new migrants continue to flow in (Pollard *et. al.*, 2008). Qualitative research argued that complex family strategies are developing, often involving long term or permanent settlement, in which either men and women may be the primary migrant (Ryan et al, 2008; Lopez Rodriguez, 2010). When their migration ceases to be a temporary remedy to problems back home, the schooling of children becomes an increasingly important complication in their lives. Indeed children's education may become a key factor in deciding whether to stay or return since parents do not want to disrupt them once they have started within a particular system (Ryan et al, 2009).

From 2005 onwards numerous voices in the media, particularly in both, the English and Polish press, began to identify issues that Polish children were facing in British schools. Those reports focused on perceptions by Polish children and their carers of UK schools as friendly places, on robust academic discipline and parental involvement among Polish families[5] but also on strong criticism of academic standards in UK schools, alienation of Polish youngsters, bullying and

[5] inter alia a study by Flynn in which she presents Polish parents as supportive, hard-working, aspirational and demanding. She maintains that Polish children are perceived by teachers as 'model learners' and that other ethnic parents, with lower level of confidence and social capital may not compare well with Polish parents (2013).

racism. For example, 15-year old Aleksander Kucharski[6] was disillusioned with the education offered to him in the UK and went back to his native Lodz. He was dissatisfied that '[in the UK] the teachers didn't test knowledge, only effort.' Yet, although the media have created a potent image of rising numbers of Polish pupils in UK schools, there are hardly any studies of the dynamics formed in the interaction of Polish migrants with the educational field. Furthermore, data collected by schools and local authorities on this group is uneven, with Polish pupils being classified in different ways in different contexts (e.g. by ethnicity or by country of birth).

Notwithstanding, the first significant academic study exploring educational encounters of Polish families was published only in 2008 (Sales et al., 2008). This study identified issues that cropped up during the three years following the accession and linked the character of Polish migration to newly formed challenges and opportunities that this migration brought. The authors discuss features of new Polish migration in the light of challenges posed by the educational system in the UK. First, the speed and the unprecedented character of the flow meant that Polish migrants often had little time and hence little preparation for the move across borders and cultures. Children were thrown into an unfamiliar environment with little or no English and their carers faced a very different educational system to the one experienced in Poland. Second, as this migration in the early stages still had a circulatory and commuter pattern, families were heavily reliant on services back in Poland, including medical and educational. This in turn meant reduced chances of integrating into mainstream British society. Third, EU citizenship for Poles created a feeling of belonging to the European Union and also of an entitlement to benefits in Britain even though those entitlements were reduced in the first years of transition. Expectations of public services were high, including educational services. Fourth, the lack of acknowledgement of diversity of Polish society (contemporary Polish society is predominantly white with 98% of population being ethnic Poles) means that children arriving in the UK have limited experience of dealing with other cultural or religious groups. This can result in misunderstandings and xenophobic behavior by both parents and children. Next, the economic capital of Polish migrants may affect their involvement in their children's education (long hours of work, irregular shifts, insecure contracts) and limit resources which children need to be comfortable with in

[6] Aleksander's dissatisfaction with the British educational system and his 'return episode' was widely discussed in various media reports after it was first published in 'Daily Mail' on 26 October 2007.

educational settings. Last, the relative dispersal of families working in services and agriculture means that schools in remote areas with little diversity suddenly have to cope with an EAL (English as an Additional Language) issue for the first time. Children may become targets of racial abuse in such settings, being visibly 'foreign'.

The considerable differences between Polish and English educational systems are likely to be a source of misunderstandings and parental concerns. To date there are several sources which in substantial detail describe the idiosyncrasies of both systems and depict how they impact on the general dynamic formed in the interaction of newly arrived Polish migrants with educational institutions in the UK (see FRSE, 2010; Lopez Rodriguez, 2010; Lopez Rodriguez et al., 2010; Moskal, 2010; ibid., 2014; ibid., 2016; Sales et al., 2008; Sales, Lopez Rodriguez, Ryan & D'Angelo, 2010; Trevena, 2012; White, 2011). Here, only main features, and those that contrast with the English system, are specified.[7]

Following an educational reform in 2009 there are following types of schools in Poland: 4 - year - pre-school provision compulsory from the age of 5, 6 - year primary school (start at the age of 6[8]) and 3 - year gymnasium (lower secondary). On completion of a gymnasium, students have the following choices: 3 – year lyceum (*Liceum Ogolnoksztalcace*) (general or specialized and ending with an examination of maturity 'MATURA'), 4 – year technical secondary school (*Technikum*) (ending with an examination of maturity 'MATURA') or 2 or 3 year vocational school (*Zasadnicza Szkola Zawodowa*). Every year children obtain a certificate of completion of a specific year. From Y4, usually there is no descriptive report and at the end of each year children are given certificates with marks for each subject. They are graded with marks from 1 to 6 where 6 is outstanding and 1 unsatisfactory. There is no any official testing between KS1 and KS2 (primary school) but pupils have frequent, ongoing internal tests directed by subject teachers to make sure they learn on day-to-day basis.

[7] Those differences are spelled out in more detail in Appendix X after Lopez Rodriguez et al., 2010a

[8] Following the 2009 educational reform children in Poland start school at 6. In 2011, the new reforms implemented lowering of the starting age of compulsory schooling (pre-school) to the age of **five** and in 2014 introduced lowering of the starting age of compulsory schooling (primary school) to the age of **six**.

Until 1989 private schools were banned but since the fall of communism a private system has sprung up rapidly. Private sector is regarded as relatively affordable alternative to a state schooling in Poland as compared with the UK. Consequently, particularly in urban regions, it is an important and a significant provider of education on all levels.

In primary school children follow a common centralized curriculum however there is a narrow range of resources (manuals) that they may choose to follow. The autonomy of schools in Poland is far more limited than in the UK, the Polish system being more uniform and centralized. The curriculum is also more static as compared with the ever-changing English curriculum. However this is also changing in contemporary Poland and an increased demand for transferable skills (such as reading comprehension or research skills) has been noted and is being taken into account in educational planning. Homeschooling is only allowed on highly regulated terms. Teaching of children with learning difficulties or disabilities takes place in special schools or in integrational classes in mainstream schools but only some schools have the status of 'schools with some integrational classes'.

Children are expected to do homework daily, from Y4 in every subject. There seems to be a considerable difference in how much time children are expected to spend on their learning and revision at home between Poland and the UK. Children have to carry their books to school everyday and this assures parental supervision over homework and the elimination of potential gaps in knowledge acquisition. While homework is marked and brought home, parents have a direct control over their children's progress and learning. Another significant difference with the UK system is that all children are expected to fulfil the same objectives and reach similar levels and therefore work sheets are not differentiated.

Starting in Y4 it is compulsory for all children to learn at least one foreign language. Most schools, particularly in urban settings, have introduced modern foreign languages from an earlier stage, starting in Year 1. Polish parents are very keen on their children to learn foreign languages and often complement school lessons with private tuition or extramural courses. In Gymnasium children are obliged to learn 2 foreign languages. In the UK, foreign modern languages are only compulsory in KS3. In Poland many parents work all day and children often attend after-school classes and clubs (*swietlica*) where they can learn photography, music, crafts, sports, ICT or languages. Such provision varies from school to school and currently is not consistent and uniform.

There is a strong emphasis placed in the Polish educational system on ecological issues and the culture and traditions of the country. Pupils are aware of the impact of humans on their environment. This is often reflected in the curriculum as they celebrate festivities and traditions, with less concern for what is being missed, particularly in early stages of children's education.

Those differences between the two systems are the major reason for parental bewilderment. Furthermore, it is the diversity of types of schools in the UK, which introduces disorientation, and which is intensified by the fact that often both, parents and their children arrive in the UK with a very limited knowledge of English. For instance a report on developing support for Polish children in Dorset (Tokarz, 2007) highlighted that most children arrive with no experience of English and only some, at secondary level had had some English tuition at school. As mentioned earlier, Polish children often arrive in the UK with a very limited experience of ethnic and racial diversity. This has been pointed out in the media.[9] In the course of time, when immigration becomes more permanent, families make every effort to create an environment which most corresponds with their imaginings of 'normalcy', well-being and familiarity in view of what they have left back home. Education of their children in a culturally alien setting, lacking experience of UK schooling, may introduce bewilderment. Such 'outsider' status automatically implies that the tacit rules of the school's pedagogy are incomprehensible to migrant parents. Faced with a great diversity of schools in terms of status (independent/state, faith/non-denominational), with ethnic imbalances and with (perceived in objectified terms) varied quality, migrant parents develop anxieties and raise concerns. Furthermore, Poles have fairly high levels of education yet typically work in low-skilled jobs and live in less affluent, working-class areas. This leads to a clash of cultural norms between the migrants and the natives: apart from sharing similar job responsibilities and/or living in the same area, the better-educated Poles generally have little in common with their British neighbours (Trevena, 2010).

Several reports have been written on the issues faced by schools as a result of Polish immigration and by the Polish families themselves. Reports identify challenges and needs and put forward recommendations for actions. The aforemen-

[9] Also, Emil Majuk in his report written for the Runnymede Trust on the aspirations of Polish migrant parents mentions that 'Poland is an almost mono-cultural country, where very few people of a different skin colour can be found. Arriving at multicultural and multiethnic London must evoke among the newcomers some sort of cultural shock' (Majuk, 2007).

tioned report by Majuk (2007) raises a point that differences, for instance, in the age of school entry (UK 4 years while Poland 6-7) or in the admissions procedure, which is more bureaucratized in the UK and lasts longer, cause confusion for the parents and often a delay in a child starting school. Weak English poses a particular problem and at this initial stage linguistic support and encouraging parental engagement are crucial. In the case of older pupils, a foreign accent may be a trigger for others' aggression and abuse. In general, parents complain about high levels of aggression in English schools and teachers' indifference towards this problem. According to his report, Polish parents complain about low academic expectations from pupils in the UK schools, which poses a problem for them in case of a potential return to Poland. Another important challenge is making Polish families keep to British term dates. Polish families tend to observe celebrations such as first communion, Christmas or Easter. As airfares are more expensive during the holiday, this often means taking their children early out of school or returning them late. A report, which was put together as a response to the disengagement of newly arrived Polish pupils in one of the Lincoln's secondary schools (Lincoln Education Authority, 2007) has identified the following challenges: poor attendance and truancy, lack of English as a barrier to communication and to accessing curriculum by pupils and disengagement of Polish families in schools. The team implementing the project has come up with some measures to target these challenges; appointing a Polish native speaker as a teaching assistant working in local schools with large numbers of Polish children and organising in –school meetings for parents and special Polish events at school. A report on support for Polish children in Dorset schools (Tokarz, 2007) based on a telephone survey of families and schools, identified several key needs for which it proposed recommendations. It found that language proves to be the biggest barrier for families, that parents are in need of information about other public services, that parents need clear communication regarding language support and school admission and that many pre-school age children do not access nursery provision. Pupils need support of a bilingual, Polish speaking teaching assistant in the initial stages of learning English. The report also identified ignorance of both, families and schools about significant differences in the schooling systems of the two countries and lack of specific resources for Polish speaking pupils.

While reports and scarce, usually press, articles about Polish children in UK schools were regularly cropping up, a relatively thorough study exploring the in-

tersection of class and ethnicity among Polish migrants appeared in 2006 (Cronem, 2006) which impinges my research. The authors focus on the dynamic, fast-changing aspect of the concept of social class and suggest that 'migrants' relatively recent, open-ended and, in many cases, transient stay in Britain deeply influences their understandings of social class' (ibid.; 3). They highlight the dimension of class as pivotal in establishing social relations in migratory circumstances and in establishing their own positionality in the UK as contrasted with ethnicity. Also White argues that 'too much emphasis can be placed on the role of ethnicity and national belonging in the lives of migrants, and 'translocal' is sometimes a more helpful label than 'transnational' to describe the lifestyles of Polish labour migrants in the UK' (2011: 162), meaning that social setting may play a more significant role in settlement and well-being than the cross-national context of their move which is usually considered to be the determining factor.

This thesis arose from a consideration of educational encounters amongst Polish migrants described in up-to-date literature on the one hand and, on the other, the dimension of socio-economic descriptors, which they use and apply. I am not only interested in the confrontation of Polish mothers with the structures of schooling in the UK but also in the links between the educational system and their self-ascribed class which guides their undertakings, particularly with regard to placing their children on the educational and social ladder in the UK.

Sword notes that Polish migrants brought to the UK an ambition for the educational achievement of their children. He highlights the parental and community pressure as a stimulus to perform well and again draws attention to their view of migration as providing opportunities for children. He suggests that they are projecting their ambitions on their children for the careers they themselves have lost (Sword, 1996). Except for two cases, all informants, in his study of identity among Polish migrants, had higher status jobs than their parents[10], which is not surprising considering their unanimous belief that 'unless you are educated, you are nothing'. The drive for the educational attainment is a force eroding the ethnic community spirit and solidarity. The Polish community is not a sufficiently stimulating social scene for the aspirational migrants and they tend to transcend its boundaries in search of a challenge (ibid.). Also Posern-Zielinski (1983) in his

[10] This trend has also been highlighted by Smolicz and Secombe (1981) – most participants were in professional or semi-professional jobs, while their Polish parents were far from elite background.

research into cultural change among Poles in America has emphasized the importance of being educated and qualified, which frequently was achieved at the expense of material well-being; he, like Sword, emphasises the drifting away of the educated to be able to get closer to individuals of similar social status, not necessarily of the same ethnicity.

Another significant aspect of the educational scene in Poland is the lack of clear correlation between original family economic status and children's educational prospects. Research of the educational attainment during the transition period between communism and the free market economy in Poland (Beblo & Lauer, 2004) has shown that the main source of household income does not seem to have a significant impact on children's educational prospects when other factors are controlled. This would correspond with Posern-Zielinski's thesis that education in exile is often gained at the expense of economic welfare (1983). Overall, neither parental wealth as measured by labour income, source of income or unemployment appear to have a significant effect on children's education. However, the effect of parental education is significant and much greater than that of family income. One exception is children of self-employed parents who face significantly better educational prospects than children of employed parents. While in employed households 28.4% of children access higher education, in self-employed household this number reaches 39.9% (Beblo & Lauer, 2004).

One suggestion for explaining why this particular group has the highest rate of children entering higher education is that this group is more neo-liberally minded, risk taking and has the determination to grasp the meritocratic chances that are laid ahead. Some suggest that migrating individuals may be similarly minded and that this frame of mind gives them an impetus to venture into new realms (Boneva & Frieze, 2001). The authors came up with the suggestion that the will to move and to be mobile is a feature of a transnationally predisposed personality. Migrants and those who undertake some sort of mobility are work- orientated, driven by a desire for high achievement and power. They have a compelling desire for upward mobility. This mobility is instigated by the fact that Poles rather than comparing to social other, compare themselves to their own, former situations in Poland (McGhee et al., 2012). Jordan in his research of Polish labour migration to the UK (2002) depicts them as 'sharks moving through the water and feeding on other organisms, but not affected by anything they encountered' and points out their competitive traits, flexibility, rapid adjustment and their fast

learning through and about primitive capitalism and ruthless rivalry. Garapich termed their life strategies as 'Darwinian' (2008) and Morawska (1999) highlighted the embedded homo-sovieticus syndrome; reliance on beat-the-system/bend-the-rules orientations. They are the perfect individualistic market actors as if they were pre-programmed to act in a market economy and to cream off the rewards of meritocracy. Their mobility and transnational orientation is constructed as a resource and capital to build their careers and future (Nowicka, 2014).

Communism, Catholicism and Transition

Most importantly, this study turns around mothers' collective, 'inherited' capital which contrasts with their, more idiosyncratic, cultural and economic capital which is not perceived as a legacy of the fusion of the communist regime and Catholicism. The collective, at times referred to here as 'public sphere capital' constitutes a legacy of being nurtured in communist ideologies which shaped the mothers' insights into British education. First, they are equipped with the cultural and social capital, which secures a relatively smooth integration into the British educational system (Lopez Rodriguez, 2005). Education has always been perceived in Poland as one of the most important factors leading to facilitating success in life and this perception is transplanted to the UK and given major importance in planning of the future of their children. Second, the regime, arguably flawed and inadequately applied, managed to establish a mind-set, which spontaneously profiles an array of inequalities and segregationist policies operating within the UK educational governance. My aim here is to unravel those policies as they are perceived by the Polish migrant mothers.

Consequently, a theme of this study is that there has been a tension between this meritocratic outlook of some Polish mothers interviewed here and their communist upbringing, which generated the bewilderment over neoliberal educational policies in the UK. White (2013) maintains that manifested regional inequalities, low social trust, shadow economies and corruption in contemporary Poland indicate that the transition from communist rule is currently an unfinished process. Arguably, we may claim that Poland is still in the primary, somewhat clumsy, stage of transition towards political competitive neoliberalism and free market economy. Nonetheless, the current socio-political climate also contributed to shaping my participants' liberalised and competitive outlook.

Polish migrants are one of the lowest paid migrant groups in the UK; while a high 85% of them are in employment (the equivalent percentage for UK-born people is 78%). They also work longer hours than other migrant groups in the UK (on average 41.5 hours a week) with only Americans ahead of them. Commonly Poles in the UK are generally known for their high work ethic and for being proactive in the search for opportunities in the job market. This may appear surprising when we take into account the collectivist nature of the ideology in which the mothers were socialized. There are several possible explanations behind the individualistic and competition driven nature of the Poles. Buchowski (1994) for instance maintains that deeply-embedded cultural patterns in the minds of Poles (among them the liberal values of Catholicism and nationalism) have never allowed communism to settle in their psyche. Also, particularly during the 1970s, when, thanks to Edward Gierek's politics (the first Secretary of the Polish People's Republic during the decade of 1970 to 1980), the snake of consumerism had entered the 'Communist Eden' (Buchowski, 1994; 137), idealised images of western democracy and of booming capitalism began to be nurtured in Poles' minds. Either the interplay of these dynamics has created a meritocratic thirst among Poles, or we may assume that one of the arguments provides a sound explanation. First hardship during the economic crises might have opened up ideas that somewhere else there is a reality (namely western capitalism) in which hard work is rewarded accordingly. [11]

Many of the studied mothers have been schooled predominantly in the transition period of the 1990s, which was still characterised by strong legacy of the past socialist ideology. The blend of both influences (communism and transition) and the added catholic dimension formed an entitlement-predisposed but also fiercely meritocratic mindset among my participants.

1.2 Objectives and importance of the study

[11] Another view, highlighted by Buchowski (1994), as a mechanism leading to anti-Communist appraisal, maintains that this mentality of neoliberal adaptability, variability and 'cunning vocation' (i.e. using unauthorized services, illegal employment and law breaking) derives precisely from the period of political and economic transition in post-1990s Poland, when the liberalization of values was so abrupt that the Poles had to sink or swim. This aptitude, as a transferable skill, is being transplanted into a new context. Therefore, there is a question whether the transition period gave Poles the spirit to adapt flexibly to the new condition and to reap its obtainable benefits.

The principal objective of this study is to give a fresh and original perspective on the encounter of Polish mothers with the education of their children in their new host country. It is a non-conclusive study where only tentative propositions are made in respect of the obtained results. My conclusions are indeterminate but I suggest that they shed some light on the complexities of human nature, child-drearing, nurturing and education. They also expose, through an anthropological 'second look' that, taken-for-granted, common knowledge can, at times, be easily be opposed and questioned, if not reduced to rubble. The research also examines why the mothers' mind-set is as it is and the relationship between their view of the educational organisation in British society and the social instruction they obtained in Poland during their upbringing process. In other words the focus of this empirical study is on migrant social conditioning as giving rise to their ideas in the unfamiliar circumstances in which they find themselves. The ultimate aim is that the research can help people in positions of power to make decisions and changes (i.e. policy makers) to better understand the effects of the choices they are making or to envisage the possibility of different choices.

Further and in more depth, my interest lies in the dynamics, which are being formed in the confrontations with educational institutions, particularly when the group in focus constitutes a minority, which may happen if the families settle outside the capital (where the majority are likely to be native English) or a large town (where the majority usually constitute other 'foreign'). Among the families, who arrive in the UK with their children, education is certainly one of the key points on their agendas and often a deciding factor in whether to return to their country or settle here. As mentioned earlier, with a great diversity of schools, parents are likely to encounter attitudes, misunderstandings, contradictions and tensions. In the most extreme form they may result in conflict, radicalisms or potential marginalization. Hence, it would be worthwhile to explore the expressions and causes of such conduct in interactions with their children's schools and in conforming to or resisting imposed policies and rules. Indeed, schools are powerful places of initiation into the new country and their essential function is to inculcate and transmit cultural norms, which at times may conflict with those learnt at home. Particularly that the way Polish parents approach their children's school in the UK is influenced by their pre-migration experiences and by culture of their country of origin (Moskal, 2014).

The social position of a foreign migrant worker is shaped by factors such as 1) economic conditions, 2) immigration policies, which often have some bearing on the former, 3) social acceptance (often affected by a cultural and socio-ethnic distance) and, to a certain extent, by 4) their individual plans, strategies and social aspirations. How important and to what extent does social capital among this group play a role in formulating and performing the necessary strategies to cope with inhospitable attitudes, cultural shock, isolation and deprivation? How does it help the migrant to survive or flourish in an unknown or even hostile land? This study also looks at how much past experiences in their home countries or their dis/advantaged position in the new setting, force them to employ tactics and to adopt standpoints needed to succeed and to offer a bright future for their children in the UK. Interestingly, within this study, a particular theme has emerged, that of being a middle-class (in educational terms) migrant parent with a heavy baggage of a specific cultural capital, with children in an inner-city school. Consequently, I aim at seeing how this group of Polish mothers (being also part of my sample) is managing the process of identifying themselves with their neighbourhoods and settings, in which they found themselves.

The objective is also to describe the mechanisms of creating new cultural forms. Migrants may see migration as a challenge but also as an opportunity. If my participants face challenges it may result in the building of new capital or it may result in exacerbating disillusionment and abandoning aspirations both for themselves and their children. How does information about the opportunities of participation spread? Are carers forced to abandon their aspirations behind or do they manage to mobilize and find alternative channels to access available educational and other services and create the sense of 'normality', perceived via their past experiences? What role does social, cultural and economic capital play in this process? What feelings and reactions accompany the relinquishing of aspirations? If deprived of opportunities, how do the children spend time after school and what are their perspectives for the future? Theories about the "lost generation" with regard to the children of migrant workers, as being those who face an identity crisis, are abundant in literature. In this context it focuses on finding out whether parents are aware of this impending condition and of its roots. What are their responses in the face of school policies imposing for instance assimilationist patterns, multicultural or anti-racist education? What do mothers make of schools' views about integrating Polish pupils? How do they experience and accommodate having to comply with the notion of cohesive communities while and

at the same time maintaining their cultural and social identity? Indeed, who and how nurtures this identity? All those questions will be addressed in my analysis in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

1.3 Outline of research questions

Here are the research questions, which guide this thesis.

- What strategies do Polish mothers in the UK apply to secure the educational success of their children and what role does class play in this process?
- What forms of capital play the major role in this process?
- How do mothers see the relationship between their home culture and that of the neighbourhoods and schools of their children and what role does class play in those perceptions?

1.4 Overview of the chapters

This section maps out the structure of the thesis and presents the content of the chapters.

The thesis is divided into three main parts: I) introduction, theoretical framework and literature review (Chapters 1, 2 and 3) II) methods (Chapter 4) and III) results and discussion (Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

Part I

In the first (this) chapter (Introduction) I outline the socio-historical background of Polish migration and the research context, put forward the objectives of the study and introduce the reader to the matter of the relevant subject and the existing literature tackling the issues of Polish migration and, in particular, of Polish migrant education. It presents the current discussion on the post-communist legacy and its links to the lives of Polish migrants. Further (Chapter 2) I elaborate on the theoretical assumptions underpinning the research methodology and bring to the reader concepts (mainly forms of capital and habitus), which pertain to my analysis of data. In the third chapter (Literature Review) I explore in more depth issues from literature, which directly or indirectly relate to Polish migration, migrant issues in general and their education. Within this chapter I introduce

concepts of Bourdieu's capital and *habitus,* which constitute the main themes of my theoretical framework but I also engage with the wider context of construction, deployment and implementation of migrant capital. This chapter also maps other ideas central to the study, which are developed further in the thesis.

Part II

In Chapter 4 I deal with methodological issues of the thesis and describe the methods used in design, data collection and analysis. A part of it is devoted to the ethical quandaries of my enquiry and to explanations of how I dealt with them.

Part III

Finally, in chapters 5, 6 and 7, a summary of empirical analysis and findings are presented. Those chapters are linked by a central theme of being brought up in a particular political system with the entire burden that such a legacy carries.

The first analytical chapter, Chapter 5, (*Neighbourhoods, schooling and migrant social awareness*) addresses the participants' insights into their relationship between their home and the culture of their neighbourhoods. I hence examine the ways in which the mothers theorize their localities through their 'Polish' lens, mark their cultural and social belonging and accommodate (creeping normalcy, concept I elaborate on later in this work) those new settings (neighbourhoods and schooling). Further, I consider the uneasiness of crossing social and spatial boundaries in order to move up the host society's social ladder and I argue the importance of socio-economic identity as juxtaposed to ethnic in this process.

Chapter 6 (*Forms of capital*) is focused on the capital affecting the process of integration into the educational and social structures of the UK. It contains a thorough analysis of the various forms of *shaped in the past* pre-migration capital, carried as cultural 'baggage' (private, collective, religion and ethnicity) as it influences the participants' negotiations of their identity and *newly formed* capital (social transgressions, opportunities). On this basis I put forward an argument about the weight of collective, acquired through public nurturing form of capital, which I define as 'collective capital', and which was formed within a public–

sphere via the mothers' upbringing under the ideologies of the Polish 'communist'[12] regime.

Chapter 7 (*Class, strategies and trajectories*) is mostly analytical and discursive. It integrates findings, brings the major argument of the thesis into focus and concludes it. It re-examines complexities and nuances while introducing a certain twist to the thesis. It discusses the tension between the legacy of communism guiding the mothers' conduct in the receiving country and the highly meritocratic, neoliberal outlook they are inclined to have in relation to theory of Bourdieu's capital and of collective 'educational capital'[13]. It explores determinants and triggers backing such a stance and attempts to answer the research questions by linking the findings with the proposed theoretical framework, thus integrating the research at another, more theoretical level.

Finally, in Conclusions and Implications I identify the main contributions, implications, limitations of the research and potential areas for further exploration.

[12] I use 'communism' here in quotes as it was a Polish cultural version of communism with noticeable 'Catholic' influence.
[13] Throughout the thesis I use 'educational capital' in quotes to emphasise this is not a Bourdieu's term but used here as referring to the field of education which is the theme of the thesis; it entails all types of Bourdieu's capital.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

2. Theoretical framework

In my work I specifically focus on the subjects, which pertain to the issues around Polish migrant children's education and their mothers' educational identities. It would however be inappropriate to neglect existing theories which have been elaborated within transnational migration studies, and which refer to the wider adaptation of the migrant community. This entails theories of social, economic and psychological well-being and of acculturation issues in the course of settlements of individuals and communities. The concepts, which are brought about or challenged here all have features which retain an intrinsic component of the process of settlement and educational integration and involve reshaping and formation of new social and cultural identities. The ideas, which I depict and evaluate in this chapter, will serve as a tool to analyse the data gathered for the research. Following the concepts which guided me, throughout this work I elucidate the resulting conceptual framework and show how the constructed by me notions of individual and collective capital of Polish migrants, which emerged, tie into both, the existing theories that led me there and the problematic of the thesis.

A considerable emphasis in this chapter is placed on Bourdieu's concepts of capital and habitus. Bourdieu's works purposely and inadvertently expose social inequalities and highlight the aspects of human capital and habitus, which either favour or deprive individuals or groups of privileges. This study brings to the surface all aspects of coping with sharply unequal aspects of society, ranging from housing to lifestyles to education. Migrants, being particularly vulnerable to exploitation and injustice, are a fine case to expose facets of society, which are often hidden unless ethnographically described and brought to light. Bourdieu's notions were identified as most adequate to explore migrants' 'weight of the world'.

In order to analyse and describe the empirical study, in a rich qualitative manner while giving the reader a lucid frame of theoretical orientation, I am determining here several theoretical constructs, to which I will later refer in the analysis of my

data. The terms, which are frequently referred to, are listed in a glossary in Appendix I. This part aims to clarify interrelations of those concepts and explain how they relate to the new theories, which emerged. First, I examine Bourdieu's theoretical underpinnings as pertaining to migrant integration and strategies within this research. This is followed by an outline of the emerged conceptualisations (revolving around collective versus individual capital) as drawn upon Bourdieu's theoretical orientations.

Bourdieu's theory of capital, regarded as a positional good, is my primary interest in disentangling the issues of the migrants' everyday coping, of formation of identity and of the motives of undertaken strategies situating them in desired spaces. However, due to the nature of the topic, in the literature review I am also introducing other relevant theories, (i.e meritocracy, liminality, social, segmented assimilation, selective acculturation, context of reception, stigma) which will also be applied in my analysis. It is the interplay of various layers of migrant identities and socio-economic structure that constitute the myriad of their experiences and, therefore, the sole theory of social capital, strategies and habitus simply cannot untangle them all.

2.1 Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu developed his concept of social capital in the 1970s and early 1980s. However, already in his studies of Algerian tribespeople during the 1960s, he gave an account of the development of the structured sets of values and ways of thinking as forming 'the habitus' (Field, 2003). Initially in 1977, he defined social capital as relationships providing useful 'supports'; honourability and respectability, which are indispensable for attracting those in socially superior positions and which can serve as a currency for instance in a political career (Bourdieu, 1977). As it also emanates from the above depiction, throughout his entire academic career, Bourdieu was interested in social hierarchy, persisting class inequalities and their social reproduction (Dillabough, 2004; Favell 2003; Field, 2003; Jenkins, 2002). He clearly divides social groups into those who are privileged and have opportunities and those who - due to their lack of acknowledgement in what constitutes the dominant cultural capital (Thorsen, 2000) - are disadvantaged or excluded. Consequently, he views such dispositions, which form the individuals' habitus as a product of opportunities and constraints framing earlier life experiences (Reay, 2004).

2.1.1 Capital

Bourdieu, being a prolific academic, analysed and theorized a vast number of concepts of which some only obliquely relate to my study. Here I shall elaborate on the ones, which I interpret as relevant to my work because resonating with my line of thinking in terms of data. In the chapter reviewing literature, I carried out a more substantiated discussion of Bourdiesian understanding and application of his concepts to the study of Polish migrant mothers. Here, for the purposes of clarification, I outline the distinctions of various forms of capital, as the line between the terms, at times, may become blurred when they are used in a more generic sense. Capital, in a generic sense, are assets put to productive use with the ultimate aim of securing advantage and power. Bourdieu refers to the following forms of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic. Consequently, 1) *Economic capital* is understood as a command over economic resources such as cash or possessed assets. 2) *Social capital* is acknowledged, in this work, as resources based on group membership; relationships, networks of influence and support that individuals can tap into and benefit from by virtue of their social position such as occupation or social connections. 3) *Cultural capital* represents forms of knowledge, skill or education; in fact any advantages a person may have which give them a higher status in society, including high expectations. Parents provide children with cultural capital, the attitudes and knowledge that make the educational system a comfortable familiar place in which they can succeed easily. 4) *Symbolic capital* is understood here and applied as accumulated prestige, honour; it constitutes elements of cultural and social capital.

2.1.2 Habitus, Field, Strategies

For the purposes of elucidation of other notions used further in this chapter I also define *habitus*, field and strategies. *Habitus*, as delineated by Bourdieu, are the person's beliefs and dispositions, which prefigure everything that this person may choose to do. It is largely unconscious and includes body movements and postures, as well as the most basic aspects of thought and knowledge about the world. Being the product of social conditioning it links actual behaviour to the reproduction of the class structure. Field designates a social arena in which people manoeuvre and struggle over desirable resources and rewards; it is a system of social positions structured internally in terms of power relationships. In

this work field of education is understood as all of the structures and stakeholders related to the child's school and education. Strategies denote choices, which allow disadvantaged individuals to break out of the expectations that the host society holds of them.

2.1.3 Why Bourdieu?

It might seem that the theme of capital, in particular, social capital as theorized and applied by two other authors, Putnam and Coleman is highly relevant for analyzing the dynamics within migrant communities and their interactions with the remaining social world; the interrogation of themes such as trust, networks, civic engagement and reciprocity has always been present in the studies of settlers. James Coleman has extensively drawn on the concept in relation to educational success and the influence of familial capital on educational achievement (*Coleman,* 1966; ibid.,1964; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Coleman, Hoffer & Kilgore, 1982). Nevertheless, it is the Bourdieu's notion of capital (cultural, social, symbolic and economic), which will serve as the main lens for my observations and analysis[14]. It throws a persuasive sociological approach onto the study of society and I am primarily interested in class and power relations in society and questions of identity. Although his work focuses on relations of class, rather than those of ethnicity and contains the least empirical evidence out of the three aforementioned authors (Adam and Roncevic, 2003), the theory highlights several features critical to my work. First, Bourdieu views social capital as a mechanism that the dominant class (in the context of my study – educationally privileged group) uses to maintain its dominant position (Lin, 2001). 'Privileged groups can benefit from, and enjoy, a greater synergy between their own life-worlds and the norms and values of key dominant societal institutions, such as the education system, which also helps them to move more easily and maximize the possibilities on offer within particular contexts' (Archer and Francis, 2006: 32). Second, his model recognizes that an individual's action is always embedded in the context of structure, though it is vital to bear in mind that in the study of Polish migrants this structure at times becomes an 'enabler rather than a

[14] The thesis by no means claims to be making an original contribution to Bourdieusian scholarship. The specific limits of my borrowing, interpretation and application of the aforementioned items from Bourdieu's tool-kit have to be reemphasised here. This study is offering an analysis of Polish mothers encountering British education, from their (emic) perspectives. In this I aimed at framing a distinctive emergent (possibly controversial) argument of vital contemporary interest with the help of relevant tools borrowed from Bourdieu's scholarship.

constraint' (Giddens, 1976). Third, Bourdieu demonstrates how capital can be used to produce or reproduce inequality, by deployment of the amounts of economic, cultural, and social capital that individuals possess.

Cultural capital is closely related to education and reproduction of social class. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital explains 'the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from different social classes' (Bourdieu, 1986: 243). Cultural capital, to a varying extent, depending on the period, society or social class, can be acquired in the absence of any deliberate inculcation and therefore quite unconsciously. Bourdieu notes that it is commonly marked by its earliest conditions of acquisition, which leave visible and distinctive marks, for example in the form of accent, knowledge or dispositions (ibid., 49).

Yet Bourdieu himself appears to place economic capital at the root of other capitals, although he regards each form of capital as possessing its own dynamic, as well as varied possibilities of 'packaging' different levels and types of capitals (Silva & Edwards, 2004). From a position that also places economic capital as key, but in a more deterministic way, John Goldthorpe (1997) has argued that participation in culture depends on economic position rather than on taste and judgement, within a framework that views economic capital as more significant than cultural capital in allowing individuals to mobilize resources (Silva & Edwards, 2004).

An important term, useful for the analysis of habitus and capital is 'social field', as coined by Bourdieu. If a social field means that a group of people and institutions have something in common which they fight for (Thorsen, 2000), such as in my analysis of the Polish migrant community in the UK, this educational field consists of all involved agents: migrant and other parents, children, schools, educational bodies etc. Each of them having a certain position and a relation to another in that field constitutes a structure of it. According to Bourdieu, within the social field various forms of habitus, at times involuntarily, will meet and its operation will regularly exclude certain practices, which are unfamiliar to the cultural groupings to which the individual belongs (1990). The habitus is not composed merely of attitudes and perceptions but, rather, of durable ways of 'standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking' (ibid., 1990: 70). Therefore, although the formal barriers of successful integration of minorities may appear to be substantially lifted, the informal, symbolic barriers persist and

hamper access to the host country's ruling class ambitions and services (Favell, 2003). Ethnic minorities are lacking the insiders' cultural knowledge, expertise and practices (Bourdieu, 1986), which makes them feel that their expectations and ways of living are suddenly out of step (Bourdieu, 2000), which in turn denies them certain areas of public life which they may strive for. As Favell suggests (2003):

> Compare their social capital with that of established elites, who have inherited all kinds of insider advantages via their starting positions and have had a lifetime's socialization through family and education in the nationally specific paths of social mobility that define success in professions and public life.

2.1.4 Dismantling of habitus

In Bourdieu's understanding capital is possessed by individuals rather than collectives. In the light of this study individual capital (private sphere capital) is juxtaposed to collective capital (public sphere capital). Collective capital, which will be the principal subject of the analysis is linked to the mothers' shared educational experiences. This form of capital, being a product of the collective domain, impacts on mothers' actions with regard to their children's education. It is postulated here that the legacy of communist upbringing of the interviewed mothers is reflected and resonates in their conduct and outlook in the encounter with the educational system in the UK. This legacy echoes in their perspective on educational qualities, which, de facto, are frequently perceived, as will be exposed in my analysis, as inequalities or discriminatory practices. It is a group capital, however, still being a form of a *collective cultural capital* rather than social. Ties, connections, networks and bonds do not form part of this form of capital. These are shared experiences, which formed a particular 'educational habitus'. The legacy of socialisation under communist ideologies implies an intrinsic outlook and conduct towards the English educational field. This outlook will be explored in Chapter 6 where I spell out transpiring characteristics affecting perceptions and processes of integration.

The richness of migratory experiences influences the forces of erratic and highly dynamic, social conditioning and contributes to breaking away from the conceptualizations of habitus as (socially) innate, durable and unconscious. Bourdieu himself terms habitus as being 'durably inculcated by the possibilities and im-

possibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions of acting in society' (Bourdieu, 1990: 54). According to Goffman, normality is a shared order to which we all contribute by following the rules of interaction and constantly referring to our frames of reference (Goffman, 1972). Normality is possible because 'the orderliness is predicated on a large base of shared cognitive presuppositions, if not normative ones, and self-sustained restraints' (Goffman, 1983: 5). However, what happens if those presuppositions cease to be legitimate? What happens when the rules of conduct fail to be recognizable and there is a need for readjustment or modification? Creativity and inventiveness can be seen as an essential element in people's behaviour when they take action to escape danger (Misztal, 2004) and this is precisely the moment when the habitus, that is the person's beliefs and dispositions which prefigure everything that this person may choose to do and which is a product so tightly linked to opportunities and constraints framing earlier life experiences (Reay, 2004), can 'misfire'. Migratory experiences may be an ideal scenario to illustrate that habitus is not durable and static and indeed its alleged feature of predictability and anticipation can fail, particularly when the rules of conduct become ruptured (or as Bourdieu puts it 'restructured with every transition') as it happens in the context of migration.

Learning about existing unfamiliar social norms and having to fit in, in order to secure company for their children triggers self–consciousness and feelings of uneasiness and watchfulness. Yet, violating those norms might constitute the precious moments when habitus misfires and new qualities are formed through transgression. Rabikowska puts it: 'moving away from home and settling in a new country can bring a sense of liberation from the constraints of original habitus which then delineated a frame for 'normality' (2010: 393). In recent years it has been more widely accepted (and explored) that Bourdieu's determinism was never as far-reaching as it was commonly established. He himself never meant habitus to be static or eternal (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1996).

> Dispositions are socially mounted and can be eroded, countered, or even dismantled by exposure to novel external forces, as demonstrated by situations of migration for example (...) [Habitus] is never the replica of a single social structure since it is a layered and dynamic set of dispositions that record, store, and prolong the influence of the diverse environments successively encountered in one's life (…) [Habitus] is not necessarily coherent and unified but displays varying degrees of integration and tension, depending on the character and compatibility of the social situations that produced it over time: irregular universes tend to produce unstable systems of dispositions divided against themselves that generate irregular and sometimes incoherent lines of action. The

concept is no less suited to analyzing crisis and change than it is cohesion and perpetuation (Wacquant, 2004: 315-319).

2.2 Individual versus collective capital

As a theoretical underpinning for the purpose of the analysis in this work, there are two main forces outlined, which have shaped Polish mothers' perspective on education in the UK and strategies, which they undertake.

The first force, which was identified is the mothers' *individual capital,* which shares features of Bourdieu's *primary habitus*. Primary habitus is composed of our earliest, childhood experiences and is constructed and maintained through family interactions and connections (Reed-Danahay, 2005). Individual capital belongs to and is expressed at the level of individuals rather than groups. In this thesis it is closely linked to the private sphere, upbringing and to the predispositions of an individual's family setting, such as class, culture and socialisation as they are realised and specifically conveyed at home. It is also an individual's gender[15] and partly material status and religious orientation. Its partial status is attributed to the fact that economic conditioning in post-World War II Poland was relatively homogenous with most members of society having more or less equal economic income and assets. Therefore, economic capital may be regarded as belonging to the public sphere; material status was shared and similar across all society. Religion, although commonly ascribed to the whole of Polish society, should also be considered as partly belonging to the private sphere while not all individuals were religious. Therefore both, material status and religion are placed centrally on the diagram, not specifically belonging to either individual or collective capital.

Conversely, *collective capital* (the second force) is constituted at the level of groups rather than individuals. It is associated with Bourdieu's *secondary habitus,* which is developed through enculturation within educational experiences. This capital is conveyed in the public sphere by institutions, particularly schooling. It was formed in a compulsory and collective (public) environment (schooling) and due to its obligatory character, was difficult to break away from or modify by individual factors and practices. Ethnicity within this study also represents collective capital; all participants are Polish.

[15] Gender has not been analysed in this work but it constitutes an important form of capital influencing strategies.

Summary

Clearly, both forms of capital (individual and collective) will influence mothers' perceptions of and manoeuvres within educational field in the UK. Nevertheless, it is the collective aspect, which is of interest here and my analysis will predominantly focus on the capital, which was formed in interactions with the ideologies of the communist regime. This I postulate to be paramount as the determining factor in how the educational field in the UK is theorised and approached by the participants of this study. The following chapters and in particular Chapters 6 and 7 deal with the structures of the legacy of being brought up in Poland.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

3. Migration, education and capital

3.1 Objectives of the literature review

The aim of this chapter is to a) throw some light on the question of how the deployment of various forms of *capital* contribute to migrant coping strategies (getting by and getting ahead) (Dűrrschmidt et al., 2010) and b) to review how minorities' social and educational failure and success are explained and defined in the existing body of literature on migration.

To date there are no specific studies of Polish or East-European mothers in relation to deployment of capital in the educational field and this review includes other ethnic minority and migrant parents' experiences of and perspectives on education and mobility in inner city areas and schools. I am also trying to reveal the rationale behind the culture of meritocracy, so strongly embedded in migrant undertakings. The practices of Polish mothers, which are discussed in this thesis are not exceptional; on the contrary, they are an exemplary material to illustrate the phenomenon of legitimising and pursuing the idea that social standing must be worked for and is arduously won. The purpose of this chapter is also to help to situate the question of why and how Polish mothers deploy their institutionalised, objectified and embodied capital in order to succeed and of where and how this capital was formed, in a broader socio-economic context, in the country of origin, Poland. This will consequently be further illustrated through the mothers' vivid accounts and analysed and problematised with references to the discussed notions.

3.2 Capital and migrant integration

3.2.1 Deployment of family capital

When finalising this literature review I encountered, rather timely for this study, a publication based on a large quantitative study of migrant children in UK schools. The report which looks at the presence of non-native speakers in the classroom and their effect on pupil performance concludes that, based on the findings, perceptions (in the media) that the increase in students who do not speak English as a first language is detrimental to the education of native Eng-

lish speakers can be refuted (Geay, McNally & Telhaj, 2012). The authors suggest that there might be characteristics about the children of immigrants (i.e. having better educated parents, stronger attachment to the labour market), that can compensate for any lack of language fluency at an early age and that native English speakers would not necessarily suffer from having such children as their peers. The report also draws attention to the fact that native English speakers at Catholic schools that saw a strong relative increase in white non-native speakers (mainly Polish) benefited to a small extent in their maths results. The children of such immigrants may be a welcome influence in the schools they attend. Although the authors have supported the hypothesis by their research, they have not specifically studied or exposed the capital hidden behind the success of those pupils. I propose that one of the critical determinant forces is the collective educational ethics, which the parents and children are equipped with and which originates from cultural forms of their country of birth.

In order to analyse the realities of settlement and the degree of integration and satisfaction of migrants, various authors have applied the concept of social capital by measuring and attempting to define what it represents when it is used as a means of successful adaptation and socio-economic mobility (Bankston 2004; Goulbourne and Solomos, 2003; Lee and Bowen, 2006; Perna and Titus, 2005; Pieterse, 2003; Platt and Thompson, 2006). There are two major trends, which tackle maintenance and deployment of capital by transnational communities (Dűrrschmidt et al., 2010). On the one hand, in one body of literature, geographical mobility is linked to a decline and breakdown of capital while family members break with the original capital, not being able to access it any more in the new context or create new one. On the other hand, other sources portray this mobility as a trigger for 'creation of new forms appropriate to their changed circumstances, with migrant families maintaining their original social capital in different ways as well as building new social capital rich networks' (ibid: 8). Children are active agents in the processes of family acculturation and take a position of cultural experts at home within the dynamics of migratory hybridisation (Sime and Pietka-Nykaza, 2015). Authors recommend educators should capitalise on those children's resources to allow smooth integration. Moskal mentions bilingualism as one of such capitals (2014) and in her study on 12-17 year old Polish pupils in Scotland advocates for drawing on the family capital in order to develop new social capital in the host country (ibid., 2016).

Scholars frequently look at social and cultural capitals, embodied within ethnic minority families and communities as potential for converting it into a capital asset – economic capital, particularly when the latter is lacking as is often the case of many migrants (inter alia Vershinina, Barrett and Meyer, 2011). Education serves as one form of such capital and much effort is put into producing and reproducing it. There is a significant body of literature on the deployment of family capital among the East-Asian (Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean) migrants in the world and this is presumably owing to their relative educational success story (Archer and Francis, 2005; Archer and Francis 2006; Cheng 1996; Ninnes, 1997; Waters 2005).[16] Archer and Francis (2005: 42), for example, show that the key strategy used by Chinese families for thriving in the educational system and maximizing the chances of educational 'success', was the creation and deployment of 'family capital', where parents made themselves into a resource – a form of capital – for their children. This involved drawing upon, and creating, forms of social, cultural and economic capital and providing 'a habitus', in which the expectation of educational and social well-being, if not social mobility, forms their vital narrative and their mindset. As the authors aptly remark, British Chinese pupils' educational success is particularly interesting given the 'working-class' background of many Chinese families in Britain; this is clearly a parallel to Polish migrants who, although sometimes highly formally educated, work below their qualifications in mostly menial jobs in the UK. Among the British Chinese sample, the family acted as the main source of motivation and advice across social classes and in fact pupils aspired to similar professional routes, irrespective of their backgrounds. Also, the purchasing of additional support occurs across the entire sample, irrespective of class background among both groups; the Chinese and the Polish families.

However, according to Archer and Francis (2005: 38), despite the tendency to view the British educational system by those groups as meritocratic, structural inequalities remain key concerns and the social distinctions and class structure in contemporary society manufacture an effect where the formation of capital is embedded in unequal realities of the experience of immigration. Also Bourdieu himself has devoted an immense volume to describe the social suffering of the silenced and powerless (Bourdieu, 1999) and the insistence of the symbolic dimension of the contemporary social conflict (Couldry, 2005: 360); it is the sym-

[16] East-Asian migrants provide an interesting comparative perspective to my study as many of the results and conclusions drawn by authors with regard to family capital are being mirrored in my analysis as it will be shown in the following chapters.

bolic capital which migrants might be lacking most. In Pascalian Meditations Bourdieu (2000a: 134) avers:

> When powers are unequally distributed, the economic and social world presents itself not as a universe of possibilities equally accessible to every possible subjects – posts to be occupied, courses to be taken, markets to be won, goods to be consumed, properties to be exchanged – but rather as a signposted universe, full of injunctions and prohibitions, signs of appropriations and exclusion, obligatory routes or impassable barriers, and in a world, profoundly differentiated.

As Cederberg notes, Bourdieu's conceptualisations of social and cultural capital are a very useful addition to the examining processes that operate to disadvantage migrant (and ethnic minority) groups (2012). This perspective contrasts with the already mentioned notion of social capital to which many policy-makers subscribe, that of social capital as glue for cohesive happy communities. Relying heavily on the social capital as a remedy they may miss the point that it can have costs for the individuals and communities involved (Zontini, 2009).

3.2.2 Lacking capital?

Although most studies on deployment of capital and its outcomes operate around the structure of class and social experience rather than ethnic origin, there has been a significant body of literature which links the concept with the integration of ethnic 'outsiders' (eg. Bodovsky and Benavot, 2006; Romanowski, 2003).[17] There is an abundance of research carried out on Latino migrants in the US (e.g. Aguilera, 2005; Cardenas and Cardenas, 1977; Hayes 1992; Perna and Titus, 2005) whose failure is largely blamed on the mismatch of the capitals and of habitus among the ethnics and the natives. In the UK similar studies focused on Bangladeshi and Pakistani migrant families (though many authors treat ethnicity as an asset turning it into capital), whose stark educational underachievement sparked debates on the incompatibility of school provision with home culture among these families (Bhatti, 1999; Blackledge, 2001; Brooker, 2002; Dwyer et al., 2006; JRF paper, 2005; Macleod 1985). Blackledge (2001) for instance argues that Bangladeshi women are marginalized by structures of power, which dictate that those with cultural and linguistic capital dissimilar to that of the majority school culture, are unable to gain access to information about, or support with their children's schooling.

[17] Such works predominantly expound on the idea of ethnic minorities, migrants, refugees and any other non-native populations as educationally downgraded and socially inferior due to the lack of or having the 'wrong' type of cultural capital as compared with the dominant native groups.

Leopold and Shavit (2013), discuss devaluation of cultural capital for educational achievement. They make a distinction between local and foreign cultural capital. They maintain that while native students (Israeli in their research) who are raised in culturally endowed homes are likely to benefit from the cultural capital of their parents, the cultural capital of immigrant parents (Former Soviet Union pupils in their research) can differ from the codes which prevail in the school system of the host country, and thus, it is unlikely to benefit the educational achievement of children to the same extent that local cultural capital does (2011: 10). Another aspect raised in the research is teachers' stereotyping of (migrant) children who do not possess the adequate (right) cultural capital; they found that what was predicative of pupils' success was schools' cultural prejudice rather than parental reading behaviour as might be expected.

Apart from being equipped with the wrong capital, as some researchers maintain, individuals or groups may experience a negative side of ethnic original capital. For instance Zontini raises the point that, in part of academic and policy literature, there is an underlying assumption that social capital is positive, since it allows people to mobilize collective resources for personal benefit (Zontini, 2009). Yet she presents the other side of the coin by exposing to what extend ethnic capital may become a heavy burden associated with obligations, discomfort and conflict among young Italians in the UK. Also Anthias, Cederberg and Ayres (2006) highlight the fact that strong family and ethnic obligations can be disruptive and conflictual particularly for women and younger generations. In the study of Vershinina et al. (2011), co-ethnic capital (arising from the same ethnicity) was only one form of capital pertinent to young Polish migrant enterpreneurs in Leicester. Those migrants looked beyond co-ethnic capital, while they faced the pressure of censure of older Polish immigrants. The older generation of Polish migrants thought the young Poles would harm their reputation.

It would be precipitative to make any definite claims in this thesis with regard to the amounts of ethnic, cultural or social capital as an enabler for academic achievement, since the outcomes will only be available and fully transparent in a few years' time, when the present generation of Polish pupils reaches the age of post-compulsory schooling and the job market. Even so, in this work I tentatively contend, as will be clear in the concluding chapter, that the habitus and capital formed in the educational context of the country of origin, might place them in a relatively advantageous position, most importantly, regardless of their class origin. In this view, any claims of undesired 'parallel communities' which seem-

ingly resist assimilation are challenged by the notion of home culture and ethnicity serving for the ethnics as a resource for integration and an inoculation against the societal discriminatory practices. Portes & Rumbaut (2001) maintain that for some immigrants, retention of ethnic cultural ties and acculturating selectively - where families preserve certain cultural values and practices at the same time engaging in selected mainstream practices of the host society - may not necessarily inhibit participation, but may actually facilitate participation in the new culture.

3.2.3 Agency versus structure

The mobility of migrants can enable them to be active actors in creating, recreating and co-constructing new forms of migration-specific cultural capital (Erel, 2010) and in this lies their creative agency. Therefore, whether migrants are disposed to thrive in their own meaningful way or to exclude themselves socially does not only depend on the *societal and institutional structures* of the host country and home culture but also on the agency of the individual capital and the ability to make free choices which is firmly related to personality traits. There has been substantial literature to defend the matter of agency as a driving force in migratory experiences and various scholars have identified features, which accompany migrant personality as these, which predispose certain people to migrate as opposed to others who stay behind. Jennings highlights the feature of a migrant as a mobicentric man, or as one of my respondents said, 'a nomad'. As Jennings claims, "the mobicentric becomes anxious when he stays still, not when he moves" (Jennings, 1970, 30). In another paper migrants are termed risk taking 'adventurers' and are considered more energetic and enterprising than those left behind (Glazer in Frieze, Hansen & Boneva, 2006). Geographical mobility can also be a form of resistance or escape, act as an enabler to become freer (when for example gays escape the homophobic climate in Poland) and can facilitate individuals to remain true agents of their fate rather than subjects moved by wider structural limitations. In O'Brian and Tribe's study (2013) Poland was seen as a society inhibiting individual growth and freedom. By virtue of transnational movements, as actors, individuals may be able to play their roles in a more conspicuous way than ever.

Boneva and Frieze (2001) argue that economic factors cannot account for the desire and decision to emigrate. Yet, what 'migrant personality' traits proponents seem to be missing are the transnational networks which frequently are the crucial pull factor and force in deciding whether to migrate or not (Davis, Stecklov and Winters, 2002; Vertovec, 2002; Waldinger, 2003). Therefore, to

assume that migrants are equipped with some particular features, which predispose them to move and to successfully establish themselves in a new context might appear somewhat unsound and the circumstances of settlement and of different patterns of educational integration can be only explained by the combination of human agency and social and institutional structures with a particular emphasis on home culture and habitus passed on via educational establishments.

3.2.4 Migrant as agent of change

Migrants, when geographically (and socially) mobile, acquire, accumulate and lose cultural capital at times in unexpected ways (Erel, 2010). Although this process cannot be reduced to individual endeavours and is bound up with wider historical, socio-political and institutional factors, according to Erel, individual and collective agency are important for creating new cultural resources in migration and transforming cultural practices into capital.

Bourdieu's limitation seems to rest on the fact that he is concerned with how the dominant class reproduces its domination, whereas he is not including any reflection on how objectively subordinate groups, such as migrants or refugees, (particularly in terms of economic and symbolic capital) can achieve upward mobility (Modood, 2004). Bourdieu's framework does not seem to examine how such groups can generate social mobility for significant numbers of their members. His theory is persuasive for the analysis of the migrant communities but there is a contradiction, which needs to be taken into account; on the one hand social capital produces inequalities and privileges, possibilities and impossibilities, 'freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions of acting in society' (Bourdieu, 1990: 54). On the other hand it is not always the belonging to certain social class, which predisposes an individual to move socially upward or to thrive in a socio-economic sense. This construct can be feasibly challenged with respect to Polish migrant families and to other migrant ethnic groups. There are structural constraints, hurdles and there is suffering but there is also striving and grasping the merits of the new world of individualization (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), of its possibilities and benefits which may result in successful upward social mobility. Habitus is a product of social conditioning within a specific social class and, according to Bourdieu, it powerfully predisposes agents to be located within the rigid world of hierarchies, social order and the status quo.

But he himself (Bourdieu, 1993) sees habitus as a power of adaptation: 'it constantly performs an adaptation to the outside world'. Although durable, *habitus* is

not static and unchangeable; Bourdieu himself also avers: 'but there is also change, conflict is built into society' (2000); and reflecting on the transformations of *habitus* among the Algerian working class during the 1950s and 1960s in France, he affirms that *habitus* is the product of social conditionings and thus of history (Bourdieu, 1990). Indeed, social capital can be invented by immigrant communities. In her study, Reynoso demonstrates how new forms of social capital are being created among Dominican migrants in New York (2003).

Also Portes discusses acting with certain means (*habitus*) as being subjected to the activation or the neutralisation in a specific context. Referring specifically to migrant communities, he lists the development of the political and the social capital in the host culture as one of the factors in the process of acculturation (Portes, 1999). Consequently, although the *habitus* is a product of early childhood experiences and in particular of socialisation within the family, it is continually re-structured by individuals' encounters with the outside world (Di Maggio in Reay, 2004) and schooling, serving as a key institution taking over most of the main socialisation tasks (Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba, 1991), and is a dynamic arena for generating new, creative responses that are capable of transcending the social conditions in which *habitus* was produced (Reay, 2004). And perhaps this is the crux of how we account for differences in the forms and the degree of educational acculturation and in the disparities in academic achievement among various minority groups; to what extent individuals or whole groups are capable of transcending their original native habitus and of adding new qualities and to what degree their social class predetermines social and professional paths.

Various studies have focussed on the problematic and the advantage of conscious and informed construction of new capital by migrants (i.a. Erel, 2010; Lesage and Ha, 2012; Parutis, 2014; ibid., 2014, Vershinina et al., 2011) building up of new capital – which is done by transcending original habitus. This new capital resourcefully created by agents is commonly juxtaposed to 'old', 'original', 'ethnic' capital. Those new distinct dispositions created in the country of residence (Erel, 2010) are formed utilising resources migrants bring with them and by transcending their original habitus. Hence, as the author points out, cultural capital is not unpacked from their rucksacks. Migrants can be viewed as "taking their bowling balls with them" when they move but it is only together with other mechanisms aiding this transfer (mostly propensity and willingness to participate) that they may make use of those balls and constitute agents of positive

(for them and host communities) social change (Lesage and Ha, 2012). Also Parutis maintains that it is both, employing pre-migration skills and acquiring new forms of capital that make East European migrants favourably manipulate their market situation in the UK (income, upward mobility opportunities, job security) to suit their goals (2014). Vershinina et al. conclude that Polish immigrants in Leceister arrive with various levels of embodied and institutionalised cultural capital and continue to accumulate new forms as they become familiar with the social field of their host country (2011). This proactive savvy individual engagement may help to undertake actions, which ultimately may lead to fulfilling accommodation of the new culture and to integration.

3.2.5 Forces contributing to failure versus success in schooling and settlement

I have focused upon the question of failure versus success in academic achievement because, though somewhat essentialist, it is commonly equated with successful educational integration; it is often used as an objectified indicator of educational and even social integration. Needless to say, there is another side of the coin; the subjective, ethnographically grasped concept of integration, that is how the participants see it themselves. I shall quote Bauman here who says that every cultural entity aims for 'not just living in society' but 'living happily', in their own terms (2001: 2). This all-embracing, universal statement allows me to clarify what is understood by success; it is having the chance to fulfil one's aspirations.

The question which scholarly literature recurrently attempts to unravel is: what forms of capital are critical for the realisation of more ambitious educational choices or for prevention of failure. Cultural capital, particularly the one conveyed at home in early years, is frequently exposed as crucial in the process of this realisation, yet it is unquestionable that other forms of capital also help to achieve this goal. Scherger and Savage point to financial resources, social networks or other persons with expert knowledge of the educational system as those factors that can help to gain support or access to further resources (2010).[18] Others draw attention to societal structures, immigration histories and the context of reception having an effect on educational performance and put those attributes before the characteristics of the educational system in the rate of success (Dronkers and de Heus, 2010).

[18] They accentuate that 'it is not only the substance of cultural practices ('contents', knowledge, tastes, preferences) that may play a role, but also the social organisation of participation in arts' (Scherger and Savage, 2010: 21).

Here are the factors, based on a review of the relevant literature, which were identified as pertaining predominantly to the notion of integration perceived in the light of academic success and failure:

- *preservation of traditional ethnic values* versus assimilating
- *literacy in the native language*
- *class differences*
- *culture*
- the *economic condition*
- *societal forces,* which depict the structures of wider society
- ability to use those *structures as enablers*
- *the context of reception (perceptions* and *self-perceptions)*
- *colour or ethnicity*
- *religious orientation,*
- *explicit cultural practices,*
- *stage of cultural adaptation*
- *past educational experiences*

In some instances migrant adaptation to schooling shows a rather phenomenal pattern of educational success and its attendant socio-economic mobility (see Archer and Francis, 2005; ibid., 2006; ibid., 2006a; De Vos, 1973; De Vos, 1983; Gibson, 1987; Perlmann, 1988), while in others it has been ridden with problems and hurdles. Here I shall explore the forces that may potentially secure educational success, or predispose to educational failure among the ethnic minorities and migrants. Perlmann (1988) asks how we are to explain the possible factors leading to, at times, dramatic differences in school achievement of ethnic groups.

One of the factors, broadly discussed in literature is the *preservation of traditional ethnic values* versus assimilating those of the host country, which are traditionally different from the home culture. The most debated question is whether ethnicity, in the form of strong ties within the migrants' own community, provides an impetus to academic success (Bankston and Zhou, 1998) or rather impedes the government's agenda of communities' homogeneity, cohesion and consensus (Cheong, Edwards & Goulbourne, 2007), which is viewed as an indispensable prerequisite for creating social capital in diverse communities. On the one hand, ethnicity as social capital has been seen as a factor that helps social mobility (Modood, 2004). On the other, multiculturalism and ethnic diversity are posed as challenges that need to be overcome and transcended to achieve a

national core of values (Modood, 2007).[19] Another factor often looked at in ethnic studies is the level of *literacy in the native language;* 'rapid linguistic assimilation of immigrant children may cause them to lose the ability to communicate effectively with parents whose English is weaker. This language gap may become a source of difficulties in monitoring their children's performance and instilling values and behaviors beneficial for academic achievement (Mouw and Xie, 1997). Conversely, the swift assimilation of the host country's language is also perceived as a progressive force for educational integration.

Marxist-oriented scholars will claim *class differences* are the answer (Modood et al., 1997) to the question of why some succeed educationally and some fail. In their study on social networks of Polish migrants in London, Ryan et al. (2008) argue that middle class professionals have a broader and more varied social circle than low-skilled migrant workers. This automatically facilitates access to wider educational field and ensures a wider and more selective –'connected' choice of schooling. Others draw on *culture* as a force forming meanings towards educational and school ethos (Suarez-Orozco, 1991). The education of immigrant children has been described as a meeting of cultures. Children bring their home culture to school and run up against the school's representation of dominant white middle-class culture and become alienated and fail (Kozoll, Osborne and Garcia, 2003). Yet, why do some students succeed while others do not, regardless of cultural boundaries?

Home culture, home pedagogy and values conveyed at home attract particular attention from many scholars trying to throw light on social and educational mobility. This type of cultural capital, while being a valuable contribution to the field, as will be shown later, will be partly contested by the results of my study. Through an indirect pedagogic practice, children, as spectators of the discursive universes of their families, learn to value the meanings transmitted by their parents' instructional discourses. Skills and norms of social conduct acquired in this way will determine their answers in other learning contexts (Morais and Neves, 2005). This phenomenon has been illustrated in Brooker's work on different forms of home pedagogy and how they influence children's performance in the early years of schooling (Brooker, 2002). When the *habitus*, which can be interpreted as an unconscious system of values, meets the unfamiliar, frictions can arise (Thorsen, 2000). In contrast, Suarez-Orozco argues that the children of

[19] I elaborate later in more detail on the discussion about ethnicity as a value and ethnicity as an inhibition to successful educational and social integration.

immigrants inhabit a vastly distinct psychological and economic atmosphere compared with their parents and, having only fragmentary knowledge of the codes of behaviour of their original cultures, may not face the frustrations of their carers (1991). Conversely, if the *habitus* is similar to the dominant schools' culture and the structures of the field are recognisable, specifically when the home pedagogy advocates the high value of education, the story usually has a successful ending in both perspectives, that of the school's discourse and of parental endorsement.

Other factors include social location: one of the key determinants is the *economic condition* migrants may find themselves in. For example, migrant communities, particularly in the early stages of their migration, may be more disadvantaged and are more likely to reside in the least desirable accommodation, often in deprived neighbourhoods where demand for housing is lowest (Perry, 2012). Aside from the burden of such inadequate accommodation on children's learning (limited space, overcrowding, lack of educational facilities etc), such areas usually have unattractive schooling, which do not appeal to the better educated contingent of natives. Economic capital translates into identity negotiations and at times, identity crisis. Referring to place of residence, Phillimore argues that it actually may reinforce identity as an outsider (2013). Living in poor or declining neighbourhoods, or housing conditions, can impact on residents' identity, self-perceptions and sense of belonging.

Another facet of social location are *societal forces* (Ogbu, 1987; ibid. 1987a) which prevail and depict the structures of wider society determining educational outcomes, one of these being *the context of reception* (Portes and Rumbaut, 1990). In their study of educational achievement of immigrant children compared with native children in their origin countries, Dronkers and de Heus (2010) conclude that the level of societal openness towards immigrants in Europe is lower than in the US and this may explain why immigrants have more difficulties in establishing themselves and why their children perform relatively poorly in Europe when compared with 'traditional' immigrant-receiving countries, such as US or Canada.

Migrants may seize opportunities in the context of structured social exclusions. In the case of Chinese families (Archer and Francis, 2005) parental preoccupation with the future of their children was grounded in migrant hardship. Anthias (2007: 794) calls it the 'usurpationary role of disadvantaged social capital'. In other words it is the ability to use the seemingly limiting *structures as enablers*

rather than disablers. Also cultural location has an impact on the degree and the dynamic of integration into the new country: *religious orientation, explicit cultural practices, colour or ethnicity* will all, it is maintained, influence academic achievement. The context of reception of migrants, which will be discussed later, entails the whole range of *perceptions* and *self-perceptions*. Migrants are constantly negotiating multiply contradictions from their displaced existence. They have been traditionally seen solely as workforce and as those violating economic principles and threatening social norms (Cheong et al., 2007). This subsequently may lead to cultural antipathies, ghettoisation, isolation and self-perceptions of migrants as victims of exclusion resulting in lowered aspirations (Bhatti, 2006).

Portes notes that the *stage of cultural adaptation* can contribute as a factor (1999). This premise is echoed in many empirical studies on migrant adaptation. In Parutis's research, immediately after arriving in the United Kingdom, East-European migrants were happy to do 'any job' in order to accumulate necessary economic capital, yet the longer they stayed, the more demands they had regarding their employment (2014). Also Vershinina et al. (2011) suggest that differing amounts of and access to social, cultural and economic capital depended on the period when the individual (Polish migrant – entrepreneur) arrived in the UK and that the passage of time allows migrants to develop additional forms of favourable capital. Athwal, Bourne and Wood (2010) point out that settled ethnic minority groups saw greater potential for improving multicultural relations and a stronger sense of cohesion between groups than the new arrivals from Eastern European countries. Eastern European migrants were likely to feel vulnerable and to think that there was no common ground between them and other groups.

In the case of Polish migrating families the *past educational experiences* and the confrontation with the new context will be of considerable importance as an active force for building necessary and advantageous capital. This dependency will be investigated in this thesis.

3.2.6 Ethnic capital

Authors assign variations in educational achievement as being subjected to belonging to one rather than another immigrant group. Suarez-Orozco perceives patterns of adaptation to schools in a host society in terms of belonging to diverse groups: EEC and non-EEC migrants, foreign-born and second generation and those who want to settle as opposed to those who want to return 'home' (1991). Others (Ogbu in Suarez-Orozco, 1991) see them in the light of voluntary

(seeking to better their future in a more affluent country) and involuntary (usually seeking asylum) or 'elite' and 'ethnic'; where the former is represented by educated, professional or highly educated and the latter by ethnically distinct, non-European, 'third-world' or post-colonial migrants (Favell, 2003). I shall contend here that the group of Polish migrants cannot be matched to one of the unique categories above but rather should be viewed as a combination of characteristics of all of such groupings. Some, due to their social location; (e.g. class, culture, context of reception) (Portes and MacLeod, 1996), individual determination, political or economic circumstances (Dillabough, 2004) will appear freer than other, more marginalized individuals.

There has been a substantial debate as to whether a positive outlook towards the host country is linked to children's academic success while overdependence on the country of origin portends to friction or failure. For example in the U.S., success is almost universally measured in terms of the degree of immigrant participation in the host society; social, cultural and economic assimilation into the host country is often the yardstick used to measure ethnic success (Suarez-Orozco, 1991). For example Portes asserts that identifying with the culture of origin or of the host country may be predictive of academic achievement (1999). Meuw and Yu (1997) point out that supportive relationship between parents, relatives and communities creates a positive environment for success. Also Ogbu poses the question of why some minorities who successfully cross cultural boundaries do well in school and those who fail to do so perform less well (1987). In the paper on the integration of immigrant children in Europe (The European Commision Briefing Paper 17, 2001) the authors assume that immigrant families through passing negative perceptions of the prospects for integration onto their children undermine their minors' well-being and shape their attitudes to future career prospects. This view assumes parents should refrain from loading their children with their worldviews and values and thus from maintaining their identity.[20]

This issue seems to be more complex than a simple duality: assimilation or resistance to it. Although maintaining a strong home culture possibly situates mi-

[20] Yet, Favell (2003), by alleging that 'elite' migrants should be able to thrive in a foreign context without needing to assimilate because they are already assimilated into the local social system, implies that 'ethnic' migrants must sacrifice their own cultural practices and habits in order to succeed.

grants in a disadvantaged position when it is confronted with the host country's educational settings and their rigid policies (Brooker, 2002), nonetheless, firstly, minorities cannot be blamed for aspiring to sustain their identities and secondly, many minorities succeed in school without losing their cultural identity (Trueba, 1988) and sustained family integrity and ethos can indeed ensure success (Archer and Francis, 2005; Bankston and Zhou, 1998) and inoculate against the poisonous effects of social and economic discrimination (Suarez-Orozco and de Vos, 1990).

3.2.7 Parental involvement as social capital

Various forms of parental involvement have been broadly discussed in the context of studies on social capital's capacity to influence educational achievement (Bateson, 2000; Desimone, 1999; Edwards and Alldred, 2000; Vincent 2001; Zellman and Waterman, 1998). Coleman (1988) maintains that family social capital comprises the level of attention parents give to their children. In his studies of ghetto schools in America (1990) he claimed that pupils in church-affiliated schools did relatively well because the messages of teachers were constantly reinforced by their immediate family, neighbours and community leaders.

This parental interest is being fulfilled in manifold modes such as close supervision of school work, engaging children in extracurricular activities, involvement in school life or instilling the value of academic aspirations from an early age. Research has shown that the levels of parental involvement for an individual student together with the volume of social, cultural, and economic capital that are available through social networks are linked to the likelihood that a student will enrol in college or enter the lower levels of truancy and college drop-outs (Astone and McLanahan, 1991; Horn and Chen, 1998; McNeal, 2001; Perna and Titus, 2004; Perna, 2004).[21] Other results indicated that even after controlling for background characteristics and risk factors, parental involvement in school was significantly associated with lower rates of high school dropout, increased on-time high school completion and higher grade attainment and that overall parental involvement in school is an important component in early childhood education to promote long-term effects (Barnard, 2004). Most minority parents share high expectations and have high aspirations with respect to the education of their children (Tomlinson, 1987) and would be willing to engage

[21] It is also correlated with higher grades (Lee, 1993; Muller, 1993; Zick, Bryant, & Osterbacka, 2001), and lower rates of behavioral problems (Lee, 1993; Zick, Bryant, & Osterbacka, 2001).

with the schools' demands in regard to participation. There has been however a mismatch in perceptions of what parental involvement stands for and this has been an obstacle in establishing a positive relationship between schools and migrant or refugee families.

3.2.8 Different perceptions of parental involvement

> 'Polish parents rarely become involved in the wider life of the school (..).They remain very much 'silent spectators' in the context of the school environment. Still, this is not a sign of negligence: their children's education is of great importance to the majority of Polish migrants, regardless of their own educational background.
>
> (COMPAS Breakfast Briefing, London, 27 April 2012)

Most perceptions of family engagement in the UK always relied on an approach which traditionally emphasized existing forms of parental involvement, usually limited to carers' participation in school endeavours and without considering that the nature of parental involvement may vary across groups. For instance a study of four school districts with large migrant populations in the USA, (López et al., 2001) found that, before parents could participate in their child's education in a meaningful way, their social, economic, and physical needs had to be addressed and therefore involving parents successfully required recognizing the cultural and educational strengths, as well as the economic and structural barriers, of the migrant families (ibid.). This is a concern of considerable consequence in my research since the angle from which the conflicting stakeholders are looking at the demands has been dramatically dissimilar and this misconception, not yet being overt, is a cause of misunderstanding and apprehension. As it will be discussed later, parental support can have various facets; it can for instance be understood as parental *involvement in school life* or as an active *engagement in children's learning*, particularly academic learning.

There has been a long-established argument, that social class of carers heavily influences the capacity to comply with schools' demands over participation in children's education. Essentially, what Bourdieu would also defend, social class provides parents with unequal resources to meet teachers' requests for parental participation (Lareau,1987). Middle class parents, in supervising and overseeing the educational endeavour of their children, behave in ways that mirror the requirements of schools. As Vincent puts it (1996; 3), 'for specific groups of parents, such as working class and/or ethnic minority parents, there is a discrepancy between the cultural framework of their own lives and that of the school'.

In fact, parental participation and cooperation in schooling became one of the focal points on the British government's (New Labour at the time) educational agenda[22]. Yet, if the concern of class-determined responses is overlooked by policy makers, this clearly will trigger advantages and disadvantages and correspondingly create educational inequalities. Although I interrogate the interaction of class, capital and migration in more detail later in this work, it is vital to point out here that parental engagement is heavily linked by academics to social class practices and culture (Crozier and Reay, 2005; Hanafin and Lynch, 2002; Lareau, 1987; Vincent and Ball, 2006). Arguably, there is research to show that parental involvement in a child's schooling, for a child between ages of 7 and 16, is a more powerful force than family social background, size of family and level of parental education (Desforges, 2003) for educational outcomes.

3.3 Migrants, their aspirations and meritocratic opportunity

Even if Michael Young has been sadly disappointed by the use and abuse of the concept of 'meritocracy' (a word which he himself coined), it clearly has gone into general circulation, especially in the United States, and later found a prominent place in the speeches of Tony Blair (Young, 1958). [23]

Meritocracy has been defined as IQ 'plus' effort; essentially an individual's social place is determined by the sum of them. Despite the negative origin of the word, there are many who believe that a meritocratic system is a good thing for society. Proponents of meritocracy claim that a system based on meritocracy is fairer and that it allows for an end to distinctions based on such arbitrary things as sex, race or social connections. It is also believed that UK is much more an open society than it was alleged (Saunders, 1996). On the other hand, the opponents highlight the existence of a meritocratic class, which monopolises access to merit and perpetuates its own power, social status, and privilege.

Until late 19th century status was generally ascribed by birth. Later, irrespective of people's birth, status has gradually become more achievable and 'status by

[22] This applies to the period of late 90s and early 2000s when Tony Blair's government held power

[23] This word has become a cliché in the narratives of equality and social mobility. 'The rise of the Meritocracy' (Young, 1958) which as a satire was meant to be a warning is echoing in today's political agenda following the Labour government's drive towards meritocratic society. In his acceptance speech in 2007, Gordon Brown affirmed that 'no matter your class, colour or creed every individual citizen has the right to rise as far as your talents take you'.

birth' was gradually giving way to meritocracy. Michael Young, in a recent publication reminds us that 'it is good sense to appoint individual people to jobs on their merit. It is the opposite when those who are judged to have merit of a particular kind harden into a new social class without room in it for others' (Young, 2001). Education became an engine for social sorting and distribution of merit. 'With certificates and degrees at its disposal, education has put its seal of approval on a minority, and its seal of disapproval on the many who fail to shine from the time they are relegated to the bottom streams at the age of seven or before' (ibid.). According to many, meritocracy remains as divisive as being ascribed to a superior socio-economic group by birth (Goldthorpe,1997).

Browne explores the tensions between family as oppositional to meritocracy and as a source of formation of meritocracy. Since no one's success should be a consequence of inherited privilege and no one should be 'born with a silver spoon in one's mouth', the institution of a family within the ideal meritocratic system becomes an obstacle rather than support. The power of the family is weakened, with the most powerful being the greatest victims, and the main beneficiary being the state. Family can no longer provide a guide to orient people's actions, or an alternative value system (Browne, 2006). In this way the state may determine the agenda and set the criteria by which people are to be judged.

Platt suggests that contrary to the above view, parental commitment is the most important resource for social mobility, and that this can be undermined where the state becomes too involved. It also may prove a very effective tool in overcoming inequalities determined by the strictly applied rule of 'intelligence and effort'. Family processes of socialisation produce individual merit, rather than genetic inheritance and economic resources. Consequently, parental engagement can contribute to developing merit in their children regardless of parental economic limitations. Families also give impetus for pluralism to be sustained; individuals who know they have the support of their family are more able to hold on to values and beliefs that are alternative to those of the mainstream. Also, families always played an important role for poorer people by instilling them with social and cultural capital and through equipping them with a range of coping mechanisms, which enable them to get on (Platt, 2007).

Meritocracy in this view is fundamentally reinforced through families; capital is enhanced and looked after at home. Hence, family is an asset to the meritocracy rather than in opposition, it acts as an ally of the effort being part of the meri-

tocratic struggle. In the midst of the meritocratic political state of opinion, various research has indicated that class background continues to be vital for social mobility and that privilege operates through educational opportunities and through parents supporting the next generation in achieving desirable educational qualifications (ibid.). Lucinda Platt analysed data from the Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study on 140,000 children who grew up between the 1960s and the 1980s. The results have shown that children whose parents were in the managerial or professional classes were more likely to end up in higher-status jobs, even after account was taken of differences in educational achievement. Her research demonstrates that a privileged background continues to operate alongside education in increasing chances of more favourable outcomes, especially among white non-migrants and that the policy ideal of a 'meritocracy', in which class no longer plays a role, is not being fulfilled for the up-and-coming generations. Nonetheless, class advantage and educational success do not necessarily operate to the same effect across groups. Educational achievement is crucial to minority group success (Platt, 2007).

A comparison between children whose parents were born overseas and white children of parents born in the UK showed young people from many minority ethnic groups were making disproportionate progress. The authors of the recent report on non-native speakers of English in the classroom (Geay et al., 2012) highlight the fact that their research shows that non-native English speakers typically attend schools with more disadvantaged native speakers. Yet, in Platt's study, after controlling the data for family background differences, Caribbean, Black African, Indian and Chinese young people were more likely to have found professional or managerial jobs than their white, non-migrant counterparts. Upward social mobility among minority ethnic groups (except for Pakistani and Bangladeshi children) was due to their educational aspirations and achievements. She suggests migrant carers often encouraged and motivated their children to gain qualifications.

Archer and Francis (2006) maintain that British Chinese working-class discourses around mobility appeared to be in contrast with accepted white working-class discourses which portray families as discouraging mobility (particularly among white working class women) and condemning them as 'getting above your station'. Although ethnic minority middle classes are in a disadvantaged position versus white middle classes, they still strive harder for meritocratic success than white working classes, clearly with an adequate outcome. Most minority groups

show high levels of children moving into a higher class than their parents which is consistent with the idea that their parents suffered downward mobility on arrival in the UK (Platt, 2005) and that the migrant generation focuses motivation on the achievements of the second generation (Archer and Francis, 2006; Card, 2005). This would indicate that migrants rely on meritocratic values, making it work for them, as they are working mostly below their qualifications but at the same time look towards the future as an opportunity of establishing their own or their children's social destination. In the case of new Polish migrants, this is coupled with their will to join 'new and forward-looking society, 'modern' and 'global' and on the leading edge of cultural diversity' (Kolankiewicz, 2006). Coyle (2011) contributes with an extension of this statement claiming that this is about social mobility and the aspiration to participate as consumers in the new global capitalism.

Lucinda Platt notes that having particular high aspirations for their children may be part of the rationale for migrating in itself. This is linked to the self-encouraging application of the imagined rules of meritocracy; striving to be placed in a different class provides a necessary ground for the meritocratic struggle and provokes setting their eyes on education. Platt concludes that indeed, while class background remains an important attribute of success for the white non-migrants, the minority groups predominantly are characterised by a much more 'meritocratic' profile, where educational qualifications are the determinants of success (2007)[24].

Van Zanten (2005) points out that migrants seem to be the group to have benefited most from the process of 'comprehensivisation', which implies that all groups have access to the same educational quality and obtain comparable educational results. Like many others (inter alia Archer and Francis, 2006; Modood 2004; Ogbu, 1987; Platt, 2007) Van Zanten maintains that this happened perhaps because they are more disposed than established 'national' or minority groups to believe in and take advantage of new opportunities. While perceiving schooling as a homogenous public service (Van Zanten, 2005), migrants perceive the whole educational system as an equal arena in which it is possible and worthwhile to compete and gain success.

[24] Despite some minority groups lagging behind (Pakistanis and Bangladeshis according to the study), commitment to education is also evident among groups that achieve less educational success. The higher rates of staying on in education among these groups suggest that all are aware of the value of education as an indispensable means to succeed (Heath and Yu, 2005).

Not all groups experience meritocratic opportunity in the same way. Lafleche (2006) has explored the understanding of the concept among the highly educated, well into their careers, ethnic minority non-white company employees. Merit for them was something one should aspire to but it is problematic when the merit itself is mediated by racism. The general feeling was that males who were white were far more likely to progress while if they were females or black males, they were unlikely to fit in due to their culture differing from that of the organization. Mobility, as they felt, had little to do with qualifications and rather it was associated with being in the right room at the right time.

They believed that there was no future for them in the way that society works today and had no faith in their own opportunities and their ability to operate within existing social structures. It seems that there is a tension about how minorities' identities are shaped in regard to their treatment in the 'meritocratic world'; some clearly sense that promotion does not necessarily take place on the basis of merit and qualifications (Dench, 2006).

3.4 Polish migrants and class

The different understanding of class results in where one positions oneself in relation to class notions (Lafleche, 2006). For instance, migrant Poles' understanding of their position in the class structure focused on what they expected to achieve in the future, as they took advantage of the opportunities that, as they thought, lay ahead for them (Garapich, 2006). Poles viewed their low paid jobs after the arrival in the UK as stepping-stones towards future upward mobility. The study has shown that Britain is seen by immigrating Poles as a predominantly middle-class society where social mobility is highly achievable and where merit is instantly rewarded. Poland, in turn is represented as a sharply polarized society offering little opportunity for people to improve their social position. Also Duvell (2004; 2004a) asserts that Polish migrants may feel as successful when compared to their realities in Poland, even if in the UK they were socially degraded and performing jobs below their qualifications. Even if someone sees herself or himself as on the very bottom of the ladder after coming to the UK, that individual is still full of hope, belief in the myth of a meritocratic paradise and of individual skills and effort being recognised (Garapich, 2006).

> "Perhaps because we are poorer and we don't have such great facilities in Poland, pupils are more motivated to seek out possibilities for themselves."

Migrating involves moving from a familiar and emotionally safe but poor, closed and peripheral environment to an unknown and risky but potentially highly rewarding world, full of educational possibilities (Garapich, 2006). The features of Poles, which are highlighted in the report, make them ideal consumers of a meritocratic market; individualism, innovative orientation, success-oriented values, belief that the UK rewards for what you do rather than who you are and that 'anyone can make it here'. Szewczyk (2014) notes that Polish graduates in the UK quickly become accustomed to life uncertainties and are able to take diverse flexible routes to advance their careers. Polish migrants make perfect actors of the fragmented, unstable, constantly changing and precarious 'risk society' (Beck, 1992). They deny the existence of class structure as if affirming its realness would impede their advancement, social climbing and agreeing that 'not all is possible here' (Garapich, 2006).

In contrast to the aforementioned group of non-white migrants, Poles being white, are almost invisible ("The New Europeans are hard-working, presentable, well educated, and integrate so perfectly that they will disappear within a generation" - Anthony Browne, The Spectator Jan 26, 2006). Poles self-ascribe and recognize that whiteness is an asset for employability, promotion and fitting in (Garapich, 2007a). The myths of whiteness, better education and the ethics of hard work (Duvell, 2004) act as a self-encouraging device to move forward and make it. This self-winding machine also constitutes an engine for being able to feel that one can compete with others, both minorities and natives. A contradictory tale is being told; the narratives of 'anybody can make it here' are mingled with condemnatory, blatantly racist discourses of cultural otherness. Their whiteness is used for constructing identities of belonging to the UK as they strongly draw a demarcation line between white/non-white migrants and ethnic minorities (ibid.).

3.5 Social class and educational privilege

When more privileged groups are able to secure access to precious resources in the form of symbolic capital, educational injustices are easily brought into being. For example, middle-class families may draw on the 'right sort' of econom-

ic, social and cultural capital, which enables them to maximize their options of sorting and selecting and therefore to secure the most desirable and privileged educational pathways for their families (Archer and Francis, 2006). The favourably, in Bourdieu's meaning, 'disposed' children fit their teachers' archetype of a respectful and compliant individual, as their docility is valorized, while the unfavourably disposed are found to present 'challenges' of inaptness. Belonging to a social class connotes differential access to cultural capital creating different patterns of educational privilege and social inequality (Ball, 2003).

Coleman, Putnam and Bourdieu, have all been recognised as the most prominent and seminal theorists of social capital but it is the latter who has written extensively about cultural and symbolic capital and linked them to explain the mechanisms of social reproduction and injustice. Coleman has developed his concept of social capital mainly in relation to the educational field and there are key elements in his developments, which will be functional for my analysis. These are mainly the importance of family values and norms as catalysers for educational integration. His findings suggest that economic disadvantage can be compensated by a durable form of social capital in the form of family norms, values and networks, as well as a broader set of community values and networks which promote particular educational goals (Dwyer et al., 2006). What has been omitted in his work are the processes of cultural and social mediation in how belonging to a certain social strata is tied to obtaining certain resources and being equipped with a certain type of capital.[25] Coleman defines social capital as 'the set of resources that are inherent in family relations and in community social organisation and that are useful for the cognitive or social development of a child or young person' (Coleman, 1994: 300). What interests me more is the family relations and responses which, are based not only on the capital possessed, but which are also producing new forms of capital; it shall be clarified and explored in the empirical data. Bourdieu also seems to fall short in examining this level of process in his work.

Although both Coleman and Putnam link social capital in education to the amount of parental engagement, Putnam, in his understanding of social capital places emphasis on 'features of social life such as networks and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives'

[25] Bourdieu has focused in his work on this aspect of capital and it is essential for my study of Polish migrant families, since the proposition which I put forward states that class, although present, is important only to a certain extent in the academic achievement of Polish pupils.

(Putnam, 1995: 664). In this meaning capital is a shared and collective rather than an individual asset. Although Polish migrant families have a shared objective of avoiding being marginalized but this objective, even if shared, is not agreed and jointly conscientized. It in fact constitutes Bourdieu's inculcated habitus more than consensus building (Arefi, 2003) as a direct positive indicator of social capital. Trust and networks are also given less magnitude in my work, although one cannot exclude the issue of strong ties (Ryan, 2011a) within the community. In Putnam's conception, outcomes and performance in education are the results of parents' social capital in the community (Putnam, 2000) and in this fashion social capital acts as a producer of civic engagement and constitutes social glue repairing fractured communities (Cheong et al., 2007) or a remedy to cope with uncomfortable or undesirable aspects of communities. It is seen as a feature and contributor of social cohesion created by ethnic diversity and immigration. [26]

3.6 Context of reception

Enough has been said earlier about the mobilizability of old and formation of new capital in migratory circumstances. Yet, it needs to be emphasised that this process will happen more readily in the presence of a number of factors including social location of the actor and the social context of reception (Anthias, 2007). Hence, the more favourable the context of reception and social location of the actor, the better will migrant resources be mobilised.

The social and educational trajectories of migrant youth will clearly be dependent on unique circumstances and sociological studies have documented a plurality of second- generation migrant destinations, ranging from middle-class immigrant professional niches to far-reaching poverty and dependence on underpaid menial jobs (Portes & Macleod, 1996). Portes and Zhou (1993) identify the social context that immigrants encounter in the new country as 'the context of reception', which consists of three levels: (1) the host government's policies toward accepting immigrants; (2) society's attitudes, beliefs, stereotypes, and prejudices about immigrants; and (3) the qualities that the ethnic communities

[26] Putnam contribution has had a great impact on the use of social capital as a contribution to the decline of political participation across communities and in this view social isolation may limit access to this resource (Foley and Edwards, 1997) This vision, however, denies the value of ethnicities and close knit communities as a constructive contribution to maintaining and producing positive capital. Consequently, norms and values, characteristic of culturally and socially akin groups would not be most relevant for Putnam.

(especially the immigrants' own ethnic group) present when the immigrants arrive. Accordingly, a favourable context, via building more effective social networks and maintaining ethnic solidarity produces an accumulation of social capital and, as Coleman (1988) indicated, the greater social capital available, the greater positive impact on children's attainment.

With regard to schooling policies, the context of reception can be rather idiosyncratic. The study that investigated the role of the school in contributing to the integration of Polish migrant children (Moskal, 2010) has found that schools differed greatly in the awareness of the problems that migrant families face and in the provision of services for new-arrivals. Some schools use interpreters or organize special meetings for migrant parents to enable them to meet other parents but others do not have the resources and frequently parents have to look for someone to help them to contact the school (ibid.). McGhee et al. also emphasise the importance of the local context for school adaptation and wider integration of Polish (and other migrant) children. They point out variations in the provision of help between rural and urban areas and significant differences between Scotland and England (McGhee et al., 2012). In the context of education, prejudices about and attitudes towards migrants from the native or more settled communities can be significant in facilitating migrants' fulfilling integration. At neighbourhood level, there are reports of discrimination against Polish migrants ranging from verbal abuse to arson attacks (Staniewicz, 2007).[27] In another study of recent migrants the participants expressed the need of being treated as equals and not being discriminated against because they were newcomers (Phillimore, 2013). Finally, within the context of reception, the importance, or burden, of co-ethnic ties and pressures is often highlighted. Co-ethnic networks perform a number of different functions for migrants with regard to the process of settlement and integration within the receiving country. The functions which Cederberg (2012) mentions in her study are: 'providing practical and emotional support, giving access to social information, providing a sense of community and security as well as an opportunity to reproduce one's linguistic and cultural heritage, and facilitating access to further networks and opportunities, including some employment opportunities' (ibid.: 63). Needless to say, apart from the advantages they may bring to the newly arrived migrants, they may also cut off (or limit) access to non-co-ethnics through lack of social interaction beyond ethnic

[27] In Staniewicz's (2007) study, her respondents have confirmed that these issues impact significantly on their lives and that lifestyle choices (destination / home / jobs / family) are all contingent upon the conditions and determinants of the 'inclusivity' of any given society.

boundaries, increased racialisation and 'othering' practices when newly arrived groups conform to different set of rules and values than those of host country.

3.7 Segmented assimilation and selective acculturation

In research on immigrants' experiences, a criticism of the 'classical' or 'straight-line', as contrasted with the segmented assimilation theory, is that it assumes that immigrants must let go of their ethnic/cultural ways and adopt the ways of the host culture in order to participate in social institutions (Navas et al., 2005; Nunez, 2004). However, recent research has called into question whether discarding traditions (such as losing the ability to speak the old country's language) always results in better outcomes for immigrants (Rumbaut and Portes, 2001).

This inclination to account for migrant integration as a dichotomy; either in terms of resistance to native cultural practices or as a loyal accommodation of host country traditions, has been a prominent tool in explaining educational success and failure of migrant and minority youth. Nonetheless, research has shown that they do better in a school when they feel supported in being engaged in a strategy of selective or additive acculturation (Gibson, 1995; ibid., 1997). Segmented assimilation theorists argue that, for some immigrants, retention of ethnic cultural ties and acculturating selectively - where families preserve certain cultural values and practices at the same time engaging in selected mainstream practices of the host society - may not necessarily inhibit participation, but may actually facilitate participation in the new culture.[28] Proponents of segmented assimilation or "accommodation without assimilation" (Gibson, 1987) argue that these groups use ethnicity as a specific form of social capital (Bankston and Zhou, 1998). Gibson, for example, claims that the educational success of Punjabi immigrants in California is associated with a swift adaptation to the formal pressures of the classroom and simultaneous resistance to the forces of unsought cultural assimilation (Gibson in Mouw and Xie, 1997).

3.8 Downward assimilation

[28] Also, the research developed from the model around the psychological interactive acculturation process (Berry, Kim, Power, Young & Bujaki, 1989) has focused on attitudes, or the way in which immigrants wish to maintain their own identity, and at the same time, relate to other groups in the host society (Navas et al., 2005).

According to Portes, Zhou and Rumbaut (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993) most of previous research on the assimilation of immigrants has assumed that all immigrant groups are bound to follow a similar path if they wish to successfully participate in the host society. Examining the experiences of more recent and diverse immigrant groups, Portes and Zhou (1993) have argued that members of different immigrant groups may follow different paths and participate in different segments of society. While the offspring of middle-class migrants are likely to benefit from the resources linked to their class and upwardly enter the privileged groups, children of unskilled workers are challenged with less favourable options or experience dissonant acculturation patterns (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001) and indeed may join the 'rainbow' underclasses (Portes, 2003). The direct consequence of migrant settlement among the inner city deprived underclass is a downward assimilation according to some migration theorists (Jencks, 1991; Lopez and Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Silberman, Alba & Fournier, 2007; Waters, 2006). Jencks examines a phenomenon in which policies aimed at restricting unauthorized immigration to the United States are instead endorsing permanent settlement of migrant families who are susceptible to abuse. This may result in downward assimilation when children respond to hostility and limited opportunity and in a transfer of deviant lifestyles, learned abroad, when these families are deported to their home communities.

There are also opponents of this downward trend who cite examples where migrants, owing to their capital, networks, high expectations and migrant eagerness, are managing to achieve a desired upward mobility in the new country (Vermeulen and Crul, 2003; Waldinger and Feliciano, 2004). A third, alternative pattern of integration suggests new settlers will neither form the rainbow underclass nor enter the elite but are likely to replicate the pattern of Polish and Italian migrants at the turn of the last century in the US and merge with the host working classes (Waldinger, Nelson & Cort, 2007).

Contrary to the concept of downward mobility, JRF research has shown that for some minority groups (Caribbeans, Black Africans, Indians and Chinese) children with working-class parents are more likely to end up in professional jobs than white British people from similar origins and that this can be explained by educational achievement (Platt, 2005).[29] Most minority ethnic groups show high levels of children moving into a higher class than their parents; while first gener-

[29] This has been illustrated for example in studies on the Chinese educational achievements in migratory circumstances (Archer and Francis, 2006; Cheng 1996; Leung 2001).

ation migrants experience downward mobility on entering Britain, they tend to have high aspirations for their children. The newly acquired privileges have been shown to operate through educational opportunities and through parents supporting the next generation in achieving educational qualifications (ibid.). With regard to the latter, I aim to demonstrate, in a qualitative manner, how the exploitation of educational chances by migrants works and whether superior (in objectified terms) education may in fact serve as an approach aimed for the sake of avoiding marginalisation. In consequence, such conduct can be reinforced and supported through relevant policies.

Summary

Literature on migrant aspirations mostly focuses on factors contributing to migrants' successes or failures in educational settings in host countries. It also describes what and how is converted into, in some cases, desirable (e.g. British Chinese, Indian) or in other, undesirable (e.g. Bangladeshi, American Mexican) capital. Polish migrant families have not been researched in this light and no studies explain what assets and what capital make Poles what they are and how they respond to the schooling environment in the UK. Even though context of reception and other structural forces have been looked at in the context of migrant integration, still much emphasis is placed on agency of individuals and on 'migrant zeal' on what non-natives become in the host country. In the case of Polish migrants this agency is partly shaped by collective capital – being reared and educated in a particular political regime and this thesis will evidence this argument.

Further, social class, as having an impact on educational trajectories, has been widely elaborated on in literature. Bourdieu himself points to the burden of cultural capital, which he closely links with individuals' social background. This thesis shall also attempt to clarify why in the case of Polish families, class, although playing a significant role in other areas of their lives, does not have such an overwhelming influence when it comes to educational aspirations and success of their children. It will add to the existing body of literature on Polish migrants and their perceptions of class.

PART II

Chapter Four

4. Design and methodology

In Chapter 4 I deal with methodological issues of the thesis and describe the methods used in design, data collection and analysis. The chapter explains the principles and procedures guiding the methodology of the research, and it provides the description and rationale of the research design and techniques used in the course of the fieldwork *(Approach, Design, Fieldwork, Analysis).* I also describe the ethical quandaries of my enquiry and give explanations of how I dealt with them *(Ethics).*

4.1 APPROACH

This research is a study of a certain community; sometimes torn apart, sometimes contrasting, cohesive or culturally mobile. Physically scattered or clinging together, they all share a similar common educational past and have a shared community history, which influences their undertakings and conduct. The values that this community represents, though shifting and incessantly dynamic, have as their core and are constructed around Christian values. Yet the same community is also exhibiting a paradoxical mixture of communist minded ideologies and features of the subsequent capitalist transformation – individualistic outlook, meritocratic predispositions and a drive to make their own lives successful. On the whole and generalising, they share the same language, worldview and specific principles guiding their children's upbringing. At the same time they also stand as a group divided by material wealth, class, educational background. The common themes as well as the heterogeneity of their experiences will be brought to light in this sociographic study, in the context of their lives and their migratory histories. I propose that first, this context of the participants' experiences which might be the determinant of their human condition and second, the

attempts of an emic perspective of the narratives make this work ethnographic in its intent.

Sociography as a discipline was inspired by a strong tradition of journalistic and literary urban research that was developed in the 19th century metropolises. Whereas sociology in general is directed towards the formulation of social laws and universal propositions, sociography and ethnography stand as descriptive sociology. They aim at singular propositions from which the generalizations might be extrapolated. Aiming to be individualizing and qualifying, sociography and ethnography are directed to the study of a single group or system so as to increase knowledge of that very subject. The phenomena studied are usually portrayed as examples of a certain concept or social type; they are representing a concept of a shared culture – a particular category of people, who constitute a social system or a social group (Brunt, 2001; 87).

Nowadays, not many ethnographers will be thinking of a social phenomenon, which they have been studying as a microcosm of the whole cultural universe, as used to be the case. The typical attempts in the early days of ethnographic studies to conduct encyclopaedic descriptive research in which all aspects of social life had to be covered have been replaced by more realistic and sociologically refined endeavours to highlight a limited number of particular themes. In this way contemporary ethnographers have become wiser and therefore more modest about their pretensions (ibid.: 89)[30].

There are two concepts within ethnography, which need a closer breakdown for the purposes of this study, that is, validity and reflexivity. Fine (1993) claims that there is no such a thing as a 'fair ethnographer'; objectivity is an illusion and that everything in ethnography is known from a perspective. Therefore, it is unethical for a researcher to report fairness in their findings. My stance and my narration is shaped by my disciplinary training, my proximity to the researched community, my experiences, and my theoretical, moral and political interests. Or, in other words, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) put it, the orientations of the researcher will be shaped by their socio–historical locations, including the values

[30] Although my ethnographic preoccupation has been reflected in my belief that the everyday 'micro-event' may be reproducing wider social structures and phenomena (Brewer, 2000) and that social forces and movement may be mirroring people's conduct and actions, this work does not pretend to represent universal phenomena concerning migrant reality. It can only stand as an insight into the life of individuals 'transplanted' into an unfamiliar context and contribute to seeing this context with new eyes.

and interests that these locations confer on them. The increasing production of ethnography by native anthropologists working in their own cultural milieu has also led to discussions of selfhood (Reed-Danahay, 2001). It is fair to qualify here that I applied restricted introspection[31] to understand my notes. The researched phenomenon is something I have experienced during the time of my migration and at times it will clearly be visible in the research and one might have misgivings about such author saturated texts. Yet, I have tried to give it the adequate reflection, which assures internal validity.

I clearly support the long-established postmodern notion that it is difficult to present reality accurately on the grounds of that a) there is no fixed reality b) all methods are personal and cultural constructs collect selective meanings of people's behaviour and c) all knowledge is selective (Brewer, 2000). On the basis of this I can only construct accounts of the world in the way how I think my participants construct their world in telling their stories. In this way I am also producing a 'tale of the field' (van Maanen, 1988), a culturally, socially and politically biased account of their and my worlds. I have acknowledged that what distinguishes my analysis and interpretations from the journalism and documentary prose is the depth, at which the abstractions and discussions of the findings are made. My validity can only be checked against this statement, however the internal validity of this research, to which I make claims, will be reflected in how the data reflect the phenomenon under study. Something I always bear in mind is that ethnographic findings must not only be valid but also relevant to issues of public concern (Brewer, 2000). 'Doing sociology and writing sociology are aimed at disclosing the possibility of living together differently - with less misery or no misery; the possibility that is daily withheld, overlooked or unbelieved. Not seeing, not seeking and thereby suppressing this possibility is itself part of human misery and a major factor in its perpetuation' (Bauman, 2005).[32]

[31] I have looked to a certain extent at my own experiences, thoughts and feelings when I was analyzing data provided by the respondents, particularly when I examined my first, rough field notes.

[32] There are clearly tensions concerning Polish children in UK schools. They are observed from various angles: those of the Polish parents, the school authorities, the other parents who have children in these schools or the government itself which needs to cope with the large number of Polish families settled in the UK in recent years. It is not my intention however to resolve social problems through which my research could be judged as valid because emancipatory. I have tried to throw some light on a particular situation, with an attempt to present the data in an emic mode in order for others to make their resolutions and the best possible assessment of the account I have produced and perhaps to take action with regard to it.

In this work I have not made any attempts to become a nomothetic researcher who creates generalisations or derives laws explaining objective phenomena. I seek individual features of an individual case 'in order to discover what social meanings it has for the participants' (Brewer, 2000: 49) and based on them I produce a descriptive theory of transition of Polish mothers in the UK. Thick descriptions may lead to theoretical descriptions but I can only describe the patterns emerging from my data. I may see some commonalities and contrasts but this is not to claim that I can come up with a fixed, close-ended and conclusive theory based on my data. I am only describing cases even if it might be seen as abstracting.

Finally, this study has the features of a monograph[33]. Although not exhaustive and systematically contextualised and sometimes transcending the boundaries of its thematic core, this work is about a group with a shared culture which is partaking in a phenomenon – mass migration.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

In this part I am focusing on the practical aspects of my data collection and analysis design. I specifically describe the process of designing the study in terms of sample, recruitment, construction of interview schedule and of my pilot study and the advances derived from it.

4.2.1 Sample framework

Back in 2005, when designing my small pilot study on perspectives of education among East-European mothers, I envisaged my sample as having minimum of categories and in order to identify the participants I used a form of snowballing technique and sent emails to approximately 35 people, mostly friends, living in the UK, who could potentially know and be willing to put me in touch with individuals fitting my predesigned categories[34]. As sometimes (or often) happens in

[33] It has features of a specialist work on a single subject, in this case Polish migration

[34] They had to fit into the following categories:
·the mother must be originally from Eastern Europe (the partner does not need to be)
·her child must attend a school in the UK (London or outside/ fee-paying or state)
·preferably but not necessarily the children joined a school in the UK after the age of four.

applying qualitative methods, the specific totality represented by the case or case group under investigation, can often only be described at the end of the data collection procedure. This was what happened with my, somewhat, convenience sample (Maxwell, 2005); bearing in mind the busy nature of immigrant mothers' lives, the length of the qualitative interviews and the logistical issues to which I was confined, I took what was offered to me. As I never had any intentions of generalisibility - within an ethnographic enquiry this is regarded with reservations and rather context and specificity is more recognised (Gillham, 2000) - my sample did not have to fulfil very stringent criteria.[35]

When commencing this PhD study of Polish mothers, I aimed at getting a wider range of social and educational backgrounds in order to show a broader spectrum of Polish migrants, and not only those circles which I most often interacted with. My strategy for collecting data was better planned, however, I found it difficult to formulate and address the request for a specific profile of my participants; that is those with lower levels of education and of English, more socially isolated and generally less affluent. This failure to find a balanced sample (wider spectrum of educational, social and economic backgrounds) has been closely related to the recruitment process and to the sources of obtaining my participants, which I describe further. My data incited me to search further afield and to interview practitioners working with Polish children and their families[36]. Towards the end of my data collection, based on my interviews, I had a very clear idea of the assorted categories into which the mothers would fit. Consequently, the categories which I outlined were: a) the kind of schools which the children were attending b) the period in which the mothers arrived in the UK (this usually fell into two categories of before and post EU-accession) c) the level of educational qualifications d) the kind of networks and relationships (predominantly Polish or intercultural) e) the status of current employment (menial/non-menial, p-t/f-t, according to qualification etc.) and f) the type of housing/co-habiting patterns. Since the mothers, regardless of their social class, were rather unanimous about their children's integration and achievements, I decided to 'triangulate' and seek the opinions of school practitioners; teachers, assistants, Polish helpers, school liai-

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[35] This approach contributed to one significant flaw: that most of the interviewees came from a homogenous social group - educated "intelligentsia" with a relative awareness of the need to be open-minded and with heightened aspirations. This opened paths to understanding specific problems of the educated, but not necessarily affluent, group of migrant mothers from Eastern Europe.

[36] The data from those interviews were not exploited for the purposes of this study.

son and minority achievement officers.[37] I have complemented this part of my research with browsing an internet forum of Polish teachers working in UK schools to seek their outlook on the matter. I have not used their postings directly (with three exceptions; this will clarified in the part on virtual ethnography) but rather as a source of background information and primary inspiration for the research themes.

After gathering the information provided by the first set of 10-15 interviews, I decided to apply a theoretical sampling, which, in the case of my study, was aimed at gaining new data from a sociologically distinct group. The first succession of mothers was predominantly well formally educated, living with non-Polish partners, relatively well-off and not experiencing the bleak realities of migrants as commonly described in scholarly literature as well as in the media. At this stage my sample required some theoretical sampling, which would allow me to elaborate the analysis of disparate categories and also to discover variations within them, also to fill my account with emerging idiosyncrasies. The category which I was specifically targeting at this stage was somewhat at the other end of the spectrum of Polish migrant mothers (pre-migration status): those with little formal education, circulating among the Polish Diaspora, with little or no knowledge of English, employed in menial, low status jobs and economically underprivileged. In English terms they were working class mothers. Strong ethnographic work requires saturation of a wide range of categories located in their cultural, historical or organisational contexts (Charmaz and Mitchell, 2001) and I was bearing this in mind when thinking of the framework for my participants' sample. A further category, which attracted my attention in the course of my fieldwork, was the status of being a temporary versus permanent migrant. These seemed to be fairly clear and straightforward divisions. Soon however, I realised that the aspects of temporariness and permanency in the migration process were evasive and fluid, as will be reflected in my findings, and I abandoned any attempt to use them as clear-cut, evocative categories.

4.2.2 A reflective note on the methodological developments of research problems

[37] This 'triangulation' was a reaction to the mothers' impressions but was not used in order to look for validity of the data (a wider discussion on the issues of validity is found in the part on the methodological approach of this study). Rather it was used to show different aspects of the same symbolic reality (Brewer, 2000) as perceived by various stakeholders.

As Evans-Pritchard said, 'what one brings out of the field study largely depends on what one brings into it' (1976: 241). My contribution to the research process is no exception. I have come to the field, firstly, with the burden of my both, positive and negative migratory experiences and secondly, with the scholarly and popular image of a migrant habitually portrayed as deprived, facing obstacles, discrimination and rejection. Migrants have been represented as alien and unwanted. Those perceptions were born out of texts demonising the host country's approach and policies in response to migrant needs, their cultural conduct and depicting migrants as contributors to the loss of cohesive societies. This imposition was my deeply anchored assumption when I started carrying out my pilot study in 2004. Yet gradually, this presumption crumbled. More and more frequently, I would see a media picture of a 'model Polish migrant pupil' and personally witness the affirmative and sanguine feelings coming from the respondents. On the one hand was the migrants' willingness to contribute, to acculturate selectively and to strive to prosper, accepting the ethos of meritocracy and the positive voices of school practitioners about Polish children. On the other hand was the 'Daily Mail' narrative of hostility towards immigration. I began to perceive Polish migrants as in accordance with rather than in conflict with the British and government discourses and I started to reflect upon the rationale for this state of affairs.

Simultaneously I realised that the group of mothers whom I had been interviewing for my pilot study (14 East-European migrant mothers) were for the most part well educated, selectively but comfortably integrated into the host society and eager to capitalise on the opportunities that the new life status brings. At this stage it was clear that I needed to search for a different social strata of Polish migrant families in order to ascertain whether I would find a similar pattern and I hear similar stories of high-spirited, self-motivated and optimistic individuals. Although my reflexive path led me from the concept of the migrant as suffering to the actual human face of the thriving individual, that is not to say that a migrant's lot might not be a dispirited one. That infiltrates through the mothers' narratives, perhaps in a more subtle and covert form and these narratives relentlessly expose, as Bourdieu would put it, the constant fight of the individual, the subjective with oppressive social forces, struggling, wrestling and often defeating them. This methodological itinerary illustrates that the development of my research problems, as often happens in ethnographic or exploratory research, was not completed before the fieldwork finished and that the collection

of primary data often plays a key role in that process of development (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 37).

4.2.3 Recruitment process

As I mentioned before, for the purposes of the pilot study it was sufficient to snowball and obtain an ample number of respondents. However, as explained, this method of sampling produced a collection of 'middle-class' mothers only. I needed, therefore, to change my tactics as to engage a wider array of social categories. Observing and occasionally participating in an internet forum of Polish mothers in the UK, I felt that I had established an adequate relationship with the forum users in order to post a general request to recruit potential mothers-respondents. It turned out, again, to be selective and unrepresentative of the general cross-section of the Polish migrant population. The mothers who responded were professional, educated and either working in higher rather than lower status jobs or looking after their children at home by choice. They were fluent in English and frequently married to a non-Polish, high-earning partner.[38] Later I moved on to asking Polish friends, childminders, cleaners and generally 'service sector' Poles for specific contacts, interrogating them in detail about the social location of the potential respondents. When this pool was exhausted, I moved on to advertising on a website aimed at Polish migrant workers, in colleges of English language, in Polish churches, in Polish centres and offering participants a small financial reward. This proved to be instantly successful and, at long last, I was targeting the type of mothers, which I had sought, though not all recruited in this way had such a profile. Applying the 'incentive method' I was still recruiting mainly mothers with some sort of post-secondary qualifications (for instance secretarial, banking, nursery education or nursing) but who, if not staying at home with their children, were working exclusively in menial, low-paid jobs in the UK as well as in Poland prior to their migration.

[38] As I wrote in my notes in April 2006 after meeting several mothers at an informal, ad-hoc organised meeting in a restaurant: *'As anticipated, 'forum mothers' are well educated, professional or in liberal professions. They are dynamic, transnational, culturally transgressive, well integrated and easily creating social capital. Most have non-Polish partners and all speak fluent English.'* This is not to say that this is a profile of all the mothers present on the forum but possibly, it is true that the 'altruistically' interested mothers were educated individuals who were able to afford the interview in terms of time, as I did not offer any incentive at this stage.

Prior to taking part in the study, the participants were given a letter (see Appendix VII), which would prepare them for the topic and the expectations of the interview and they were free to ask any questions arising.

4.2.4 Sample characteristics

The sample in this study consists of 40 mothers who spent at least the first 20 years of their lives in Poland. All of them had children attending schools (primary or secondary) in England (all but six in London) and were familiar to a varying extent with the framework of English schooling. 23 were educated to university level, holding at least a BA degree, 12 worked in the UK in non-menial occupations, 5 in menial jobs and 23 were not involved in paid employment. Their ages ranged from mid 20s to early 50s. Most had been living in the UK for between a few months to 10 years and they had diverse experiences of their children's schooling.[39] Only 5 mothers (8%) have lived in the UK for more than 11 years. The current group (for the purposes of the PhD study), which also includes some of the pilot sample, is more diverse in terms of educational levels, familiarity with the English educational system and the strength of ties with the co-ethnic and non-co-ethnic communities. It is also more varied as regards close family ties. 27 of the mothers formed 'Polish relationships' as juxtaposed to 12 who were in mixed partnerships. All women but one lived with their partners, whether the latter were Polish or not. The nationality of the partners included UK, Irish, Spanish, African[40], Turkish, West Indian and Moroccan. Their children were of different ages, the youngest being 3 weeks old and the oldest 15 years old. All children attended state-run (primary or secondary) schools[41]; community (20)[42], Roman-Catholic (17) or Church of England (17). Secondary schools, (eight mothers/nine children) included a city academy, a local comprehensive and a selective grammar school. Family size varied between one and five children, with the majority of mothers (16) having two.

[39] This group of participants varies somewhat from the group among which pilot interviews (for my MRes research) were carried out. In the latter, there were predominantly well-educated and well-integrated mothers who spoke fluent English and, being relatively well-settled, had a sound idea of the structure and realities of British state schooling. Five Polish mothers from the pilot study became part of my sample for the PhD study.
[40] For the purposes of anonymity the country is not provided.
[41] Data are provided for the second interview in the case of panel interviews – for more explanation see the text that follows the categories.
[42] This number is inflated by one family of 5 children and 1 family of 3 children, all attending community, non-denominational schools.

One mother, Nina has lived in London significantly longer than all other mothers. She is the only participant who arrived in the UK in the 80s (1981, directly before an introduction of Martial Law in Poland) and is the oldest mother in the sample (she was 53 at the time of the second interview). However, her special status within this sample has been an asset; she has experienced fully-fledged socialist educational structures rather than transitional times, like most of the other mothers and occasionally she also served as a point of comparison with the new, post accession participants in this study. She set up family relatively late and has not been interested in schooling matters before she had Tomek. In this sense all issues related to education were for her fresh and unprocessed.

List of interviewed mothers

In case of several participants only general description of place of residence is provided in order to preserve their anonymity. Where two interviews took place, the first interview's place of residence is provided.

Mother	Place of residence	Child(ren) Name/Age	Time of Arrival
Lidia	S-E London	Mila 12/16 Rena 14/18	B
Urszula	Cricklewood	Alek 11/13	B
Mariola	Bromley	Arek 8/11 Tina1,5/4,5	B
Alina	North London	Marek 8/10	B
Ada	Crystal Palace	Adam 4/7 Franek 0/2	C
Alicja	Battersea	Nela 10/13	B
Vera	Central London	Viva 6/8 Giza 8,5/10,5 Mika 1,5/3,5	B
Nina	Crouch End	Tomek 7/10	A
Bogna	Central London	Ania 8/11	B
Renata	Lewisham	Romek 5/7	C
Anna	Walthamstow	Ala 7/9 Pola 8/10 Eloi 0/2,5	B
Edyta	Central London	Vika 2 Gala 10	C
Ida	Slough	Antek 9	C
Ola	Archway	Pawel 9	B
Lila	Luton	Darek 7 Maja 2	C
Nora	Chiswick	Kalina 8	B
Julia	Blackheath	Daria 14	C
Aniela	Central London	Roma 11 Irek 8 Remek 5	B
Dorota	Manchester	Sara 11 Inga 14	C
Halina	Manchester	Jacek 4 Teodor 7	C
Irena	Croydon	Pola 6	C
Justyna	Slough	Michal 9 Agata 11	C
Klara	Leyton	Oliver 1,5 Hugo 1,5 Wala 6	B

Kamila	Wood Green	Zuza 7	B
Maria	Greenford	Mirek 1,5 Leszek 3 Witek 5	C
Olga	Central London	Wanda 3 Ela 5	C
Roza	Acton	Jola 9	C
Zofia	Acton	Rafal 6 Sasza 9	C
Wanda	Acton	Sylwia 10	C
Weronika	Acton	Beata 0 Basia 10	C
Mina	Streatham	Gabriel 7	C
Karina	Kent	Edek 8 Lara 7	B
Eliza	Lewisham	Helga 1,5 Bolek 9	C
Emilia	Lewisham	Andrzej 7	C
Danuta	Acton	Sebastian 3.5 Radek 6 Waldek 9 Antonia 2 mth Magda 15	C
Sylvia	Acton	Piotr 7 Iwona 9	B
Natalia	Central London	Ilona 7	B
Agata	Acton	Victoria 8	C
Greta	Central London	Milosz 5 Jacek 9	B
Sonia	Kilburn	Hanna 7	B

When quoting the mothers I use an index system. To each name, I add the following signifiers in brackets: (name, level of education group, professional status in the UK, time of arrival in the UK group, first/second interview in case of panel interviews). Group **(A)** are mothers who came before 1990 (fall of communist regime in Poland), group **(B)** are mothers who came between 1990 and 01. 04. 2004, group **(C)** are mothers who came after 1.05. 2004.
Example: (Mariola, 4, not in paid work, B, 2nd int.)

The tables in Appendices IV and V describe, in more detail, the characteristics of the mothers' situation, locality, their children's schools, ages, housing, neigh-

bourhood, employment, length of residence in the UK, etc. The diagrams I attach in the Appendix VI present this statistical data visually.

Panel interviews

I also carried out 10 repeated interviews with 10 of the mothers (half of them participated in my pilot interviews used for my MRes research) from the general sample with the objective of obtaining a panel, two-dimensional data collected at 2-3 years intervals. This has added a new angle to the study particularly for the parts in which transformations and social transgressions are analyzed. Changes of material status and more tangible transitions are presented in the table of transformations in Appendix V (Table with Information about Panel Participants; transformations), while more elusive processes are examined in textual analysis.

4.2.5 Constructing the interview schedule

I constructed a set of questions through which the topics of my interests could have emerged (see Appendix II). Although guided by my research questions, they have not been strictly formulated only according to them as I always treated the study as open-ended and exploratory and aimed at finding new, unfamiliar insights and areas of enquiry.

I have structured my questions into seven sections. The order in which they were asked varied, depending on the circumstances of the interview.

1. Background information relevant to the study

Factual information about the family

Moving forces

2. Experiences

First experiences

Attitudes towards child's school

Barriers

3. Values

Expectations with regard to children's education

Ideologies/values

Future /aspirations

The meaning of education

4. Practices

Family routines

Extra-curricular activities and practicalities concerning them

Parental involvement

5. Past experiences

Parent educational/ professional history

Past educational experiences - impact

6. Identity

Social self-identification

Perception of the other

Spiritual education

National/cultural identity

7. Reflections

Cost and benefits for children's education

4.3 FIELDWORK

4.3.1 Data construction and collection

In this part of the methods chapter, I describe the strategies used for collection and construction of my data and the conundrums and challenges arising from this process during my fieldwork. The data collection procedure consisted of interviewing Polish mothers with children in schools in the UK (predominantly in London), talking to several practitioners, of note taking during my fieldwork, which produced large amounts of fieldnotes, and of some webnography – using internet spaces for collecting information (Puri, 2007). I carried out 50 interviews with mothers (10 of them repeated at intervals of 2 or 3 years), 5 interviews with practitioners involved in working with Polish children (though the collected data were not used here), I trawled three different internet fora in order to obtain the relevant data, observed contexts and particular occurrences of migrant lives and produced field notes. I also lived the experience myself using every possible opportunity to get acquainted with the subject. Limited statistics of Polish children at schools are available but they are based on the information about their linguistic background. Alas, no census fell into the period from the EU accession of Poland to the completion of this research; such a census could have provided

useful data on the situation. The census of 2011 was carried out after the completion of my research and revealed that since Poland and seven other central and Eastern European countries (collectively known as the A8) joined the EU in May 2004 around 66 per cent of all A8 citizens migrating to the UK have been Polish citizens. Between the year ending December 2003 and the year ending December 2010 the Polish-born population of the UK increased from 75,000 to 532,000. The 2001 UK Census recorded 60,711 Polish-born people resident in the UK. In 2011 this number reached 532,000. More recently immigration of Polish people has declined. Immigration was highest in 2007 at 96,000 Polish citizens, but this declined to 39,000 in 2009. Emigration has also decreased from 54,000 to 29,000 over the same time period (Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, 2011).

4.3.1.1 In-depth interviewing

Rationale for choosing semi-structured interviews

The appropriateness of interviewing on a particular topic can be considered in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of this form in relation to the designed outcome (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). There are several reasons why this method was chosen:

- It allowed me to unravel certain complexities and to open paths that had not been anticipated because of my ignorance (Arksey and Knight, 1999).
- It facilitated examining ambiguous views and behaviours or ambivalent feelings, which are likely to complement the premeditated and internalized conceptualizations about the topic. Unlike, for example, questionnaires, it allowed space for clarifications and omissions (Hughes, 2002: 209) In the area that I am researching it may be of a great significance to refine potentially damaging misinterpretations.
- It is the most viable method for discovering complex interconnections in social relationships (ibid.: 209). As Patton (1990) notes, informal conversation increases the salience and relevance of questions in regard to previous ones. The complexity and the wealth of data likely to be concealed beneath the surface calls for continuity and working in depth rather than relying on large quantities of

superficial information.

- It facilitated observing and understanding nuances and subtle expressions (Hughes, 2002: 210), whereby participants' intentions are conveyed and the real meanings disclosed. This may add to creating a true picture of the social phenomenon I am researching.
- Usually this kind of data is socially situated in contexts. Guided interviews provide these contexts more readily. Observations of the mothers' households or milieus, unexpected incidents, reactions and anything that happens "beyond" the interview, will have a bearing on the analysis.
- As this is an unresearched area and my study is of an exploratory character, interviews can well serve for formulating new hypotheses or can help identify variables or relationships.

Establishing the context of the interviews with the mothers

Most interviews took place in London, where the mothers live. A small number of participants come from outside London – from Luton (1), Slough (2) Kent (1) and areas of Manchester (2). Interviews were carried out mostly at mothers' homes but also in public spaces such as cafes, pubs or parks. They ranged from 1 to 3.5 hours in length but their average length was 1.5h. Occasionally a child or a partner (1) were present but mostly mothers were on their own during the interviews. One interview was carried out with two mothers together. I always received a welcoming and friendly treatment at their homes, I was offered food and drink and the mothers often offered to meet me at their local stations. These short walks were excellent for breaking the ice and establishing common ground, so producing trust. It was me who interviewed all of the mothers and also recorded all the conversations on a digital recorder to be able to transcribe and translate them later. In some interviews I was able to cover all of the scheduled issues, while in others I focused on the most pertinent topics for the participants while making sure that the interesting topics for me were also covered. This was a successful technique as it allowed me to identify the most pressing concerns of the mothers. In the beginning of an interview I simply let the participants pour out their concerns rather than impose my rigid categories.

Conversation with a purpose

> "Complex human experiences are not things that people can glibly speak about in an organized fashion"
>
> (Gillham, 2000a)

Choosing semi-structured interviews for collecting information on attitudes, experiences and dynamics formed on the basis of interactions with other ethnic, cultural or social groups in schools, seemed the most feasible option. The nature of my relationship with the respondents somewhat influenced the character of our communication. To a certain extent, we all come from a culturally, geographically, linguistically and socially akin background, are of similar age, speak the same language and occupy the same social status in respect of schooling in the UK. I was seen as a mate and an equal partner holding similar views rather than a powerful researcher bound by an agenda. Rigidly following a structured interview, deprived of prompts and digressions would seem offensive to my respondents who, often referred by individuals well known to me, would not want to place themselves in an inferior or distinctive position but as a Polish mother talking to a Polish mother. Taking into account that in the case of this qualitative study the quality of gathered information will greatly depend on the respondents' trust, honesty and openness, I assumed that a guided focused interview – conversation with a purpose, would be the most successful tool. In fact these conversations with a purpose were not very different to occasional chats with other mothers carried out in less formal settings such as public transport, local library or park where I frequently managed to establish rapport with Polish mothers and we exchanged ideas and concerns.

Nonetheless, interviews even if intending to be exploratory, conversational and free-flowing, still need to be carefully planned (Knight, 2002: 62). This has been a central feature of my preparations. Participants were deciding what was important to them and how long they wanted to speak about an issue (Arksey and Knight, 1999) but I was trying to cover most of the areas in question. The concept of a semi-structured, conversational interview was applied in the procedure for maximizing emic rather than etic perspective, where language and ideas produced are closer to the participant's narrative, rather than to the researcher's one (ibid.) Respondents were not obliged to fit their experiences and feelings into predetermined categories, which they might feel were mechanistic and im-

personal (Hughes, 2002: 211). During the interviews I was aiming not to be overly directive.

I ignored some of the directives about how to carry out interviews as irrelevant. It was a moment of glimpsed reality and I wanted spontaneity so I went with the flow and with the needs of the interview. For instance, if the mother was reticent, I would give her examples so she could relate them to her everyday practical life. If, on the other hand, she was loquacious, I would not necessarily stop her but proceed on the basis of statements I found interesting or controversial or unfinished or contradictory. I questioned the mothers' bearings and mindsets when necessary and I do not feel that it has invalidated my data to any extent. I have occasionally used vignettes, a technique that involves hypothetical or real scenarios being put to respondents, to stimulate their comments. One of the most common ones was where the mother imagines the situation if her child does not get a place at the desired secondary school; they would be stimulated to reveal their imagined (re)actions, judgments and strategies. For the study focuses on future perspectives; such future, potential actions and aspirations were successfully elucidated via this technique. Mothers would vividly describe situations, which related to their personal experience, which they could understand.

An important aspect of my interviews, as I only realised later, was a careful reading between the lines, 'listening' to non-verbal reactions and obtaining information from innuendos, self-contradictions or denials. Sometimes I had to look for the true, ethnographically valuable meanings in covert and subtly expressed overtones or self-betrayals and then, after the interview, contrasting it with my notes. In my findings I have tried to illustrate such discrepancies and contradictions and inconsistencies. As Brewer puts it 'the essential feature of interviews is that the verbal stimulus is used to elicit a verbal response, however the answer is rarely itself the main object of the research but it is usually taken as an index of something else that is unseen in the interview and that is a real purpose of the research' (Brewer, 2000). This was often the impression I had and only going through the material with a certain theoretical frame allowed me to find the wanted behaviours and intentions. I agree that apparent disclosures may or may not reflect subjects' crucial concerns (Charmaz and Mitchell, 2001).

Ethnographic validity

The question that arises here is whether we can talk about standard criteria of assessing validity (Silverman, 2001) or in terms of valid questions and answers when discussing ethnographic, most likely exclusively qualitative, methods of

data collection. If there is no one "correct" interpretation of reality (Janesick, 1994), perhaps it would be more appropriate to talk about a descriptive or internal validity (Uwe, Kardorff & Steinke, 2004: 184). Therefore, by examining individual experiences of migrant mothers from Poland I have tried to portray their attitudes, behaviours and meanings, as unique to each individual and as seen through my eyes and only later they were used for emerging comparative analysis. There is no doubt that the definition of validity, understood as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomenon to which it refers, (Silverman, 2001) is seriously flawed if it is being applied to an ethnographic enquiry. Whose account is more valid? Whose reality counts more? Can we, in fact, propose a set of ideal, correct questions to unravel a bounded phenomenon? I have not tried to merge together a multiplicity of voices which are truly unique and I have not tried to portray individual views as an integral, almost perfect picture of unambiguous data by (Gillham, 2000) cleaning up the picture and depicting it as tidy and uncontradictory. On the contrary, the wealth of information available to me was, at times, puzzling but allowed for more sophisticated interpretations and deeper insight, often backed by particularity of the contexts.

Trust, Reciprocity and Emancipation

The concept of trust is closely related to the validity and ethics of the implementation of my tool – in-depth interviews. At a certain point I became aware that, as a matter of fact, interviewers often have no doubt about their own good intentions but that they do not anticipate the type of material that can be generated and related according to the needs of the inquiry (Seidman, 1998). Perhaps, to be fair and verify this internal validity, the final analysis of the collected data should be ideally presented to the informants for examination so that they can identify any of my interpretations with which they are uncomfortable. As Seidman aptly but crudely notes "a researcher is there to learn and not treat participants, interviewing is not a therapeutic relation"(1998: 91). However, I proceeded in a way in which I felt that I treated interviewees not purely as informants, but also as partners in a dialogue where all learn (Fielding, 2004) and live through a positive experience (Kvale,1996). In this sense the interview was transformative for the subjects. Also the fact of realising that one has ideas, and giving participants a chance to think about these ideas gave it emancipatory dimension. The reciprocity and equity (Seidman, 1998) has been a strong focus when talking to the mothers and hopefully my sensitive listening, interest and maintaining a free flowing conversation rather than imposing an organised inter-

view all contributed to building those features. I am inclined to claim that this is the crux of obtaining worthwhile data through an interviewing technique.

4.3.1.2 Field notes – observing the field

> 'Anthropologists are those who write things down at the end of the day' (Jackson, 1990:15)
>
> 'Suburban, almost rural area of London, very tranquil and laidback, throughout the whole interview the mother shouts at girls to be quiet, to shut up otherwise they 'will be smacked'.. aggressive tone which sharply contrasts with the soft tone of voice she uses in a conversation with me'
>
> (from my field notes May 2006)
>
> 'When going to meet them I had no clue as to what their motives for coming to the UK, qualifications, financial situation, social status etc. Even when walking to the institute where the interview took place, I still did not know whether the two mothers had their children at deprived schools, lived in run-down neighbourhoods and worked in coffee-shops to make ends meet or, as it turned out, lived in a wealthy area, sent their children to privileged white schools which would be recommend by a PCT representative and had an income quadruple that of the average UK salary'
>
> (from my field notes July 2006)

As has been mentioned previously, my field notes served as invaluable material to complement my other data. Those notes consisted of descriptions of interviews' contexts, depictions of situations judged to be peculiar or unfamiliar and of my reflections as they pertained to the area of my research. They were filled with my impressions, perceptions of idiosyncrasies and contrasts but also of notes on behaviours matching the narratives. They were jotted down on trains, in buses, in the parks or in cafes, usually fairly soon after the interviews took place. Accounts of what was happening were mingling with my reflections and questions. They were memoranda of the meetings and events rather than analytical, glibly organised and usable data. Yet, those notes were not preliminary or marginal to what I was doing; they were handily complementing my fieldwork even if they lacked the coherence and scholarly discipline of organisation. I have used them to establish the context of the interviews and of interviewees when analysing date from the interviews.

Different ethnographers have different views about the interpretation and use of filed notes (Emerson, Fretz & Show, 2001). Mine were not a sort of fixed material for analytic enquiry. They were and are not static; they are being constantly revised and reinterpreted in the light of subsequent enquiries. I have always im-

agined them as possibly usable material some of which would be incorporated into the finished text (Brewer, 2000) as excerpts – possibly visually distinguished by italics from the accompanying commentary and interpretation. They often served as perfect exemplars of an alleged pattern producing a text, which provides persuasion (Atkinson, 1990) in a form of concrete exemplification next to discursive comments. Perhaps they have not been at the core of my research and undoubtedly they had a pragmatic rather than analytical and methodological value but they gave me vivid images of context and data, which would not necessarily be brought up in my interviews.

My notes are far from being the realist tale as described by Van Mannen, with almost complete absence of myself in the text. In such a genre the world is described 'objectively' as though from the natives' point of view (van Mannen, 1988) Descriptive writing is a process of representation and construction. Notes are always selective, voiced, and angled because they are authored, they simply present a version of the world as perceived by me based on my experiences and my predispositions. Clearly my descriptions were not a simple matter of recording facts or of producing written accounts that 'mirror' reality – but rather they reflected particular purposes and commitments. Some things seemed to me to be more significant than others and now, retrospectively, I can observe that, as an ethno-sociographer (term I coined for a researcher who acts within the fields of both, ethnography and sociology), I kept emphasising issues around class, poverty, gender and inequalities. My notes, as any notes would be, are full of bias and again, with time, this bias becomes more detectable and consequently notes are an excellent means of self-reflective examination of it and of one's development in the comprehension of the researched topic.

4.3.1.3 Virtual ethnography

Online ethnography or virtual ethnography, sometimes also called netnography was widely applied for more than a decade in the marketing and consumer research. Webnography (Puri, 2007) goes beyond the traditional notions of ethnographic fieldwork, extending it from face-to-face, spatially localised communication, to technologically mediated, interactions in online networks and communities. I shall reiterate here and clarify that this study cannot be looked upon as online ethnography as my primary source of material for analysis was interviews with mothers. I did examine the relevant fora and occasionally participated in them (this removes my status of a lurker) but I mainly saw the online resource as an inspiration for the formulation of my own classifications and research questions rather than answers.

My webnography has been focused on three major facets. I used three internet fora as a kind of 'treasury' full of invaluable information on the questions I am exploring. Next, I extracted and analyzed mothers' postings, which were relevant to my research area treating this process as partly providing me with a sort of backcloth for my further data collection and partly as a provider of material used for refining and saturation of the data derived from interviews' transcripts. Finally, I selected chunks of text for citing but, before this procedure, I asked each individual mother-author of the potential citations for an informed consent, assuring them of anonymity and confidentiality.

4.3.1.4 Informal communication

On the top of the more formal ways of generating data (interviews) I used techniques, which could be classified as 'informal research'. Any researcher, particularly in my situation of an insider, is not free from such practices; the process can be depicted as collecting mental field notes when every moment of interaction and observation is registered and processed. As mentioned previously I have lived through the experience of situating myself in the world of British schooling and British society, as have my respondents and we often shared spaces and exchanged communication, which was directly or indirectly related to my research topic. I have exploited every possible occasion to talk, for example in the Saturday Polish school of my children, in public spaces (such as parks, playgrounds, libraries, shops etc), or in children's activity clubs (after-school clubs). The conversations relating to education, schooling or housing arose and flowed spontaneously and there was no need for the mothers to be prompted; possibly, our common migratory circumstances and belonging to the same culture facilitated communication.

4.3.2 Challenges of the field

Negotiating access

It is difficult to speak about gate keepers as such in this research. The data is not particularly sensitive (with the exceptions of aspects of multiculturalism which were discussed in the interviews) and Polish people are fairly relaxed when expressing their political views, likes or dislikes. Indeed, even the issues of otherness did not present a problem for my respondents who willingly, mostly overtly expressed their views and preferences, sometimes in very negative terms. They had little awareness to what extent such data could be sensitive if not damaging.

Yet there seemed to be an uncomfortable hurdle of access, that is, the expectations that my respondents held of me as a researcher or simply another Polish mother. This predicament is discussed further below. On the one hand class has posed an access issue when finding the respondents that I needed. It was the less educated mothers, who were only qualified for menial jobs, who hardly spoke any English and who, as a rule, had Polish partners which I found most challenging to recruit. I felt that this group was the most distant to what I represented as a researcher, in terms of education, everyday activities, lifestyle, tastes and interests. I had to resort to such methods as going to playgrounds with my own children and identifying parents whose Polish was clearly based on restricted linguistic codes (Bernstein), who were accompanied by their Polish partners and whose habitus (in Bourdieu's definition) was visibly distinct from the social circles of my friends. I subtly tried to befriend them to accomplish my goal.

On the other hand, when it came to closer encounters, social background ceased to interfere and the bond could be easily established on the basis of trust and common experiences. Presumably, an educated, middle-class English researcher would face more substantial challenges in the UK when aiming to talk to socially lower situated English respondents. This has not been an issue among the Polish community as class and status liaisons do not influence the individuals' nature of their bonding to such an extent; a sense of shame, pride or resentment seem to be more prominent in social relations in the UK between and across classes. My access might have been hampered by firstly, the mothers' lack of interest in my research and secondly, limited free time due to pressing commitments such as childcare, professional or domestic work.

I shall discuss in greater depth the mothers' perceptions and expectations of myself later in this chapter. However, expectations, which could not be met from my side, were not limited to the mothers. In one of the schools in which I carried out exploratory interviews with school staff, I was expected to lead a project aiming at integrating Polish parents. I was not sure of how my role was envisaged; as a potential employee in the school or just as a suitable and useful resource to utilise in passing. The practitioners in that school were trying to involve me because they had great difficulties in integrating Polish parents. Although ethically dubious, I have offered to help in interpreting, being later able to use the data from my observations of Polish mothers in school settings.

Today feminist scholars perceive ethnographic interviewing as a dialogue and many focus on the talk going on in the interviews and on to what extent data are shaped by both parties (Sherman Heyl, 2001). This emancipatory technique, unconsciously applied by me, has immediately allowed for an exchange built on trust and facilitated settling on common ground. This is not to say that this strategy always opened up an array of hidden nuances and innuendos; indeed, there were interviews in which I could sense that there was unexpressed important context but for apparent reasons it is not appropriate to stipulate in the analysis about those unrevealed truths. Such truths might have for instance concerned the status of their employment, legality of their work, previous social status in Poland or how successful their children were in academic contexts.

Insider

I shared with my participants:

- Nationality
- Language
- Culture
- Experiences of schooling and of being brought up in the socialist regime
- Gender
- Being a mother
- With many, similar age (although many were younger and a few older)
- With some, occupational status (performing a non-menial job)
- With most, economic status (however a few were economically worse off and some more affluent)
- Concerns of a parent who migrated to an unfamiliar environment (such as childcare, maintaining children's languages, bewilderment over UK schooling)

My role within the study was both of an insider but also an outsider. Although I was an insider to the theme of the study (mainly due to my ethnicity and the fact that the phenomenon I was describing was familiar to me), many of my participants would perceive me as an outsider to what they were living through. In order to establish the status of insideness/outsideness, they would ask relevant questions such as who looks after my children when I carry out my interviews,

who I socialise with, what income brackets I fall into or where I live. My first interviews were often arranged through snowballing or simply involved individuals whom I would know in a particular capacity and they would usually know my views and my experiences, at least to a certain extent. Their social background, socialisation and often, professional circles would be similar to mine and we would share problems associated with our migration.

While in an anthropological perspective I would be regarded as an insider, in various ways I could be portrayed as an outsider to 'my own' community. Undeniably, at times it proved challenging to separate my own life from my ethnographic fieldwork; I was researching phenomena that I was in the midst of, my close friends would be finding respondents for me, and some of my respondents would be familiar with my worldview possibly making the research data skewed. While, as mentioned previously, my initial interviews would involve participants from social circles closer to mine, such, further afield, I started interviewing the other end (as for an 'insider') of the sociological spectrum; individuals who would strongly cling to their ethnicity. To the interviewees I was an insider, due to our shared ethnicity, but I was not feeling like one. Their experiences were so different from mine; they were performing different work (usually menial, irregular and poorly remunerated), they would be socialising in Polish circles unfamiliar to me, the food they were eating was distinct (usually more traditionally Polish) or their way of speaking Polish was different to mine. This group of participants were much more knowledgeable on the issues of everyday coping, welfare benefits, places to buy Polish foods or Polish popular artists visiting the UK. I realised I was simply outside the shared by them space and I felt that a whole new, notably exotic reality was being constructed in front of me and revealed to me. So it was the sense of heterogeneity within my own community, which possibly was a feature, which a non-Pole (outsider) would miss, seeing only my 'shared' with other Poles ethnicity (Colic – Peisker, 2005). This outsider status was experienced by me in threefold ways; (1) as described above, through my own feelings about the shared and non-shared culture, (2) from the perspective of my participants (notwithstanding ethnicity I often 'belonged' somewhere else) and (3) from the perspective of an uninvolved observer – I was regarded as an alien in relation to English socialisation, lifestyle and education. When, for example, owing to my children I would meet and start small talk with a middle class, usually white English mother, the first hint of being regarded as alien would be the very subtly expressed surprise over my knowledge of English beyond their expectations. The reference they would usually be using was their Polish cleaner,

nanny or a waiter they met in a restaurant, who represented for them the stereotypical Polishness. For such an outsider, it would be hard to imagine that I had perhaps more in common with them than with my co-ethnics. With regard to point (2) there was a feeling, on my side, that some Polish mothers actually treated me as an outsider. This would normally come up in the interviews when they found out that I had a non-Polish husband, that my children do not speak Polish at home as theirs would, that I am in the position to pay them for the interviews which would imply depending on someone granting me generous funding or that I speak Polish with a standard national accent. One mother asked where I came from and remarked that 'I speak Polish with a funny accent' and that 'I must have been here a long time because I speak with an English accent'. By this comment she marked her otherness by indicating that her language was dissimilar; she was contrasting and establishing a wall between me and her.

Regardless that developments in anthropology went through the notions of 'far away', 'nearby' 'relativist' or 'positivistic' research, it is commonly established that anthropological or ethnographic legacy is based on the premises that it deals with things and phenomena that are 'foreign, exotic and peculiar' (Brewer, 2000: 13). This would imply that there is a problem with insiderness here and an insider is compelled to make the familiar unfamiliar and fascinating. Even when researching a familiar group or setting, the researcher is required to regard it as anthropologically strange in an effort to make explicit the presuppositions s/he takes for granted as a culture member (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Hence insiderness can be associated with bias and though this bias is unavoidable, I had to be sensitive towards it in my research.

Be that as it may, the crucial dimension of being an insider was that I felt it was an advantage because it helped to establish a common ground and empathy with my participants via being the same puzzled, often taken aback, and concerned mother, with all the fears that education of children brings. I do not make claims that my work as an insider will be superior, closer to reality or thorough. It simply will have a different set of prejudices, expectations from the participants, and perhaps will be able to throw light on the dynamic from the perspective of a researcher being closer to this community and sharing its experiences. Even if a problematic exposed in this study seemed to be mine while perceived with my eyes, I can suggest it probably belongs to the whole community as it is shared and collective. Within the sphere of schooling, my respondents and I had a similar background and outlook, and we found shared revelations.

Handling identity in the field – the mothers' perceptions of me

For the mothers who participated in the study, apart from shared ethnicity, I was also an insider because I was a woman, a potential friend, 'one of us', as high-status because educated like them and as interesting because doing interesting work. In general, rather than being seen as powerful researcher, I stood there as a potential friend often being their age and having the same concerns about my children's schooling. Several mothers were gently interrogating me about the place where I live, my material status, plans regarding my children's secondary school and they seemed consoled by the fact that the topic of a decent secondary school was strongly on my mind and that I lived on a council estate. It was as if they wanted to hear that I was not different from them but within their scope of experiences, socio-economic status and had the same perspectives and chances for the future.

I noticed that in some cases, revealing the identity of myself as a mother, as a person facing the issues that my participants were facing, established bridges of trust, common experiences, common human condition and of shared 'educational habitus'. Frequently the mothers were projecting their assumptions that we had the same background by saying 'well, you know what I am talking about…' or 'it was like that with **us** '. This implied that they were placing me within their social, economic, and educational boundaries rather than of others. Nonetheless, on the other hand, revealing this identity of a mother having children in English schools has been influencing the quality of collected material. I could see how my respondents, when not knowing of my situation with respect to having children, would be talking to me as if revealing a whole new world in front of me, which would be as fascinating for me, perhaps as a potential parent or simply researcher, as it was at the time for them. As soon as they learnt I was in the same boat as them, they would change the narrative into: 'well, you know what I am talking about, do you really need to know more?' as if ascertaining that we had the same experiences and expectations and that the discourse around schooling, being explicitly shared, did not need to be spelled out.

Positionality /cultural halfies

As I described earlier my positionality has its advantages. Apart from the cultural and linguistic assets, which helped me to establish a good rapport with the concerned mothers, I was also a cultural halfie (Abu-Lughod, 1991) being familiar with the complex English educational system, speaking fluent English and operating in an English speaking family.

Hammersley and Atkinson note that people will try to gauge how far the ethnographer can be trusted, what he or she might be able to offer as an acquaintance or a friend and also how easily she or he could be manipulated or exploited (1995: 83). The mothers' motives for being interviewed for this research were manifold; sometimes I did not feel any pressures and expectations from my participants. This particularly applied to my acquaintances and friends of friends or well-informed mothers present on the forum where I recruited mothers; the overall idea and aim was simply to help me to obtain relevant data. Yet, in other cases I represented some kind of incentive often as a role model. Some mothers tried to gain precious for them information about schooling and admissions. Some sought opinions about particular type of educational institutions or wished to confirm their dilemmas and concerns. I served as a knowledgeable, Polish speaking consultant, as a researcher interested in the educational issues which triggered their anxieties and who could possibly dispel those worries. For a few, it was a financial incentive or potential friendships for their children or even an escape from migrant isolation. As I described earlier some respondents saw me as a mediator between the conflicting sides when I was expected to launch a campaign for integrating Polish parents in a school, which found it problematic.

Possibly this is the best place in my study to acknowledge and explore my worldview and political positionality with references to the propositions and conclusions I offer. The paramount reservation is the fact that I have fairly strong sentiments about what my respondents have been noticing, namely the classed dynamic of schooling in the UK, the robust factor of educational and social reproduction happening in the UK through the mechanism of education, and the racial, ethnic and social divides in British schools. I am aware of my message and my mission and so should be the reader; I do believe that the class character of education can be challenged and reversed and I hope to show how Polish migration can contribute to challenging the status quo. I recognise that some policies brought to the surface by my respondents are prone to lead to such reproduction and though it has not been the core theme of the theses I realise this political aspect will be intersecting my work in various capacities. So to reemphasise my role and my positionality in this research, it is important to reiterate that what one brings out of the field study, largely depends on what one brings into it.

Working with the recorder

Using a recorder for the purpose of transcribing interviews, which I carried out has not, in the majority of cases, posed a problem for my participants. They, as

a rule, took it as a matter-of-fact, unremarkable practice. This was a surprise for me as, I expected a more questioning attitude from the respondents and in fact, in the introductory letter, which I would send to the mothers prior to the interview, I occasionally omitted the subject of being voice-recorded. Only in one case did a mother almost reject the idea of the whole interview when she found out that it would be recorded. This working-class mother, contacted by my Polish child-minder, has not been informed about the recording and the prospect turned out to be paralysing for her. I explained that after transcribing the interview I discard recordings and this helped to gain her consent to carry out the interview. I have not offered them transcripts of their interviews for validation but I offered to inform them about the completion of the research.

Disclosure and an interviewer effect

Clearly, in my interviewing technique the notion of an unobtrusive ethnographer has been abandoned. The researcher will always have an effect on the communication that occurs within the research site (Fine, 1993). The degree to which one is an "active member" affects the extent to which communication as a requisite for valid and interesting data is possible. When interrogated, I clearly explained that my children were in an average mixed state school. I presented to them snips of my material migrant reality and explained that I lived in an inner city borough in a small flat without any prospects of buying a property in a sought-after area with desirable schools. I also often explained that my research was funded and that this was a form of work, and in some cases this triggered interest about my path into a research career. I was often seen as a source, a potential fountain of knowledge about schooling and particularly admissions and differences within the two educational systems.

As a researcher one often has to suppress or play down one's personal beliefs, commitments and political sympathies and this is not necessarily treated as a great deception (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 91). I felt that my participants were drawing conclusions that if I did not challenge their ideas, I must be agreeing with them, in particular with regard to political views or educational standards in UK schools and that they were interpreting my concurrence as concurrence with their own beliefs (Klatch in Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) – my nodding was usually interpreted as acceptance. But I have also inspired or triggered certain answers by my gentle provocations during interviews. I was aware that this could actually give me a richer context and data and accordingly I was occa-

sionally overstating my convictions. I have discussed that in the section where I describe the methodology of my interviews. It is not ungrounded to say that I have created and produced data together with the subjects of this study (Fontana and Frey, 1998); yet I clearly feel responsible for the narrative logic of the finished product.

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

4.4.1 Material for analysis

The analytical process undertaken was based on five different types of textual material:

1. After ***transcriptions*** of the interviews which were 'listened-translated-transcribed' I used colour coding using highlighters to identify emerging themes or as Strauss and Corbin (1998: 102) would put it to 'open up the text in order to expose the thoughts, ideas and meanings contained in them.' I grouped them into headings and have extracted excerpts, which could potentially be used as evidence, citations or as case studies representing a particular phenomenon. This preliminary colour coding allowed me to build a portfolio of themes and areas, which would be exposed to continuous revision and supplementing with additional forthcoming data. This was the stage of seeking relationships across the whole corpus of the transcripts and of identifying stable features of the gathered data (Brewer, 2000). Importantly, I feel obliged to express my reservations about the process. I am inclined to agree with Bailey (2007) that finding themes and insights do not automatically emerge through coding. Theme construction occurs from the start of the research idea and while the data provides raw material, it is the researcher who controls final results. SPSS program was used for carrying out simple counts of a sample and for devising graphic representation of relevant frequencies (such as time of arrival, number of children, type of school etc.).

2. During four years I have extensively tracked three ***open internet fora*** from which, I 'harvested' information about mothers' concerns in relation to their children's education in the UK. I exploited fora as an inspiration for themes brought into play by mothers. I also have selected excerpts, which I could utilise in reporting my findings. The selection which I considered to be apposite to exemplify the relevant phenomena and which I wanted to refer to, were copied and pasted but before quoting them in the final product, the author would be contacted and asked for consent.

3. I also carried out an analysis of my ***field notes***. These notes were rich in detailed descriptions of my reflections and of the context of interviews and enabled me to identify contradictions and idiosyncrasies.

4. An appraisal of a major part of media releases and ***press publications*** in the UK as pertaining to the Polish community, with particular emphasis on schooling and education, was also incorporated in the analytical process.

5. I occasionally scrutinised the ***Polish press*** in the UK (such as Cooltura, Goniec Polski, Dziennik Polski, Polish Express) and Polish internet portals in order to examine the perspective of Poles and their concerns in relation to educational matters, as perceived by the researched community themselves.

4.4.2 Analytical process

After the initial Straussian technique of open coding, which allowed me to pinpoint the most striking patterns from the data, I engaged in a more complex but ethnographically more compelling tactic. Its first step entailed listening to all the interviews and outlining several categories according to which I carried them out. At this stage I created headings and placed relevant citations extracted from completed transcriptions under each heading for constant comparisons. I was aware that this strategy ignores a wealth of worthwhile information provided by the participants, which was not applicable for the devised headings and I cautiously assigned it to the category of 'miscellaneous'.

Having done all this, I was becoming increasingly aware that in aspiring to an ethnographical approach, the categories and groupings I imposed were somewhat unethnographic because they were strictly mine rather than those of the respondents. I listened to the interviews once more, read the transcriptions and jotted down ideas, which initially had seemed unrelated but were closer to the outlook of the mothers because spontaneously expressed by them. This first stage, now looked neat and systematic which it had not been before. On the contrary, the analysis and coding was a messy, painstaking, going back and forth process where lots of ideas had to be crossed out and loads of paper were used. It has been, as Van Maanen puts it 'a struggle to piece together something reasonably coherent out of displays of initial disorder, doubt and difficulty' (Van Maanen in Elliott, 2005: 164). Furthermore, I tried to organize these ideas into a coherent pattern by linking and grouping them and adding new, more ab-

stract categories.[43] When this was completed I rearranged the transcriptions under the new headings and finally by applying the selected quotations I could report my findings. The findings were again examined against the applied theoretical frameworks of capital, habitus and selective acculturation and analysed through the lens of those theories. Though research questions were guiding the research and the results were aimed at resonating with those questions, new ones were constantly arising throughout the whole analytical process, as the data were intending to go beyond and delve into the unfamiliar in an explorative manner.

Amidst the profusion of data, it has been useful to think in terms of 'case studies', which illustrate a certain phenomenon; this is not to mean that the highlighted phenomena were only applicable to individual cases but that a few mothers' accounts have been deliberately selected in order to illustrate my conceptual constructs more succinctly. These case studies are presented in Appendix XIII and should be looked upon as illustrations of phenomena, processes and mechanisms that were happening, in their own idiosyncratic ways, throughout the sample bearing in mind they meant to be show-cases for the analysed themes and can enhance understanding of the themes I touch on.

4.4.3 Translations

All interviews were translated during their transcription. This process of 'listen-translate-transcribe' was dreadfully time-consuming but there was a purpose to it as, working on an academic level and interrogating the text via theory formulated and embedded in English, felt more manageable than creating categories in the language of the respondents and later translating abstract notions into English. Working in two languages during the course of analytical procedure could be complex and confusing. Undoubtedly the incessant analytical acts happening in my head were automatically translating the Polish transcript of my data into English, as after so many years in England I am not sure what my 'thinking language' is.

The translation also introduced another set of intricacies; analysing data through nVivo became unviable as there would be difficulties with automatic coding of the data by retrieving or counting frequencies of words. Bearing in mind the nature of my spontaneous and inexpert translations, where the fine shades of meaning are often lost (Colic-Peisker, 2005) this would simply be unworkable.

[43] This is illustrated in Figures 1, 2 and 3 in Appendix XI. The subsequent diagrams essentially demonstrate the process how I reached some of my final headings (presented in Figure 4) for the analytical chapters of the thesis.

For example I would at times use different English expressions for the same Polish phrase and vice versa and certain idiomatic expressions would be distorted by the computer assisted analysis program. Often, there is no equivalent English word capable of capturing the subtle nuance in the meaning of the original language and meanings are lost in translation (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 285). Therefore, methodologically I would be unable to justify analysing data collected or translated by somebody else, not involved in analytical process.

4.5 ETHICS

4.5.1 Ethical dilemmas of researching physical and virtual communities.

Ethical dilemmas are evident throughout the entire process of conducting ethnographies, including the design, implementation and reporting of an ethnographic account (Fine, 1993). As ethnography engages working with individuals, and delving into their private lives, practices, social and political views and often providing an extensive and rich context of their circumstances, the notions of anonymity and confidentiality must be particularly safeguarded. Ethnographers or any qualitative researchers have a particular obligation to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, protecting the dignity and present and future wellbeing of the participants and obtaining voluntary and *informed* consent (BERA guidelines). Fine (1993) notes that researchers often make idealised ethical claims which in reality are intrinsically based on partial truths. As he points out 'each job includes ways of doing things that would be inappropriate for others to know' (ibid., 267). To console the ethnographers' community, he also notices that such self-deceptions are unavoidable and by lying we reveal truths that escape those who are not so bold. [44]

I have carried out part of my research through internet fora and this was the realm where I found the above notion especially relevant. In webnography (Puri, 2007) particularly, there are various contexts, circumstances and conditions and

[44] My ethical dilemmas have been oscillating particularly around the conceptions of informed consent. To what extent do respondents know what and how their voices will be reported and how much can they know about the aims of the research if I, as an ethnographer, know so little while in the process? Is, for instance, euphemizing 'racism' with 'perceptions of otherness' when presenting the aim of the research, morally justified and fair to the researched? There are many questions, which are clearly blurry in establishing what is ethically acceptable and what is not. Ideally the paradigm of ethical pluralism, which maintains that some solutions and views are better than others, and that they heavily depend on context and are multivalent, is better than the paradigm of dogmatism or ethical relativism where 'anything goes'.

there is a lot of ambiguity and a lack of established common ground on admissibility of practices. I have exploited the fora's texts in two ways: (1) direct citing of the mothers' statements and (2) examining the fora for the formulation of my own classifications and conclusions. In relation to the first, I had the choice of asking for consent to be cited, informing participants that they would be cited without taking into account their (dis)agreement or simply quoting their phrases without asking for permission or even informing them of it. From the legal point of view, as long as I could guarantee their anonymity, I would most likely be excused and my actions would be legitimate. Hewson, Yule, Laurent & Vogel, (2002) observe that 'while we expect others to disagree, we propose that using data that has been deliberately and voluntarily made available on the public Internet domain (including on the WWW and in newsgroups) should be accessible to researchers, providing anonymity is ensured' (ibid.). Yet I concluded, following AOIR, that protecting human subjects' rights to privacy, confidentiality, autonomy, and informed consent meant approaching subjects at the very beginning of research to ask for consent (http://aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf).[45]

Summary

This chapter introduced the research methodology used for this study and explained how it has guided data collection, analysis and development of theory. Firstly, I provided methodological approach and clarified how it influenced the overall design of the thesis. The subsequent two sections describe procedures and techniques used for gathering and analysing the data. It concludes by exploring the ethical predicaments of my enquiry and explaining how I dealt with them. Hopefully the chapter allows the reader to evaluate the quality of my results and analysis.

[45] My ultimate decision was asking all the participants whom I decided to cite, for permission. Also I mentioned to them that their names (or nicknames) would be altered, that the source of the data would not be revealed and that they would be free to rephrase their statements if they felt there was something they wanted to change, though the text would be published in translation. There were further assurances which I felt were relevant to the context of my study and which were in line with the internet researchers association's guidelines:

- The data would not be further processed in a way incompatible with the initial purpose(s)
- Excerpts would not be kept longer than necessary according to the purpose of the processing and when this purpose was achieved, they would be destroyed or erased
- They would be collected only for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes

PART III – RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Chapter Five

Neighbourhoods, schooling and migrant social awareness

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the mothers' emotional dealings with the social past in Poland and the present social setting in relation to their children's education and upbringing. It looks at mothers' position in their new environment and depicts various aspects of how the world around them is constructed, delineated, adapted and ultimately accommodated. This chapter has been divided into six sections. First, as a background and an overview, I present a general setting of the mothers' socio-economic positioning and later I begin this analysis with the mothers' ethnic and social liminality. Following the discussion of the mothers' liminality, (5.1) this chapter proceeds by examining the mothers' engagement with their neighbourhoods and exploring how they self- define in social and cultural terms and on what basis they theorise and 'other' other groups within the host society (5.2, 5.3, 5.4). It will then go on to trace 'crossing' or 'mobility' which relates to geographical, social (such as networks) and cultural spaces, that is moving beyond familiar cultural order (5.5). The final part (5.6) critically assesses the dimension of class within the scope of geographical settings.

When quoting the mothers I use an index system. To each name, I add the following signifiers in brackets: (name, level of education group, professional status in the UK, time of arrival in the UK group, first/second interview in case of panel interviews). Group (A) are mothers who came before 1990 (fall of communist regime in Poland), group (B) are mothers who came between 1990 and 01. 04. 2004, group (C) are mothers who came after 1.05. 2004.
Example: (Mariola, 4, not in paid work, B, 2nd int.)

5. Neighbourhoods, schooling and migrant social awareness

> Here they generally don't meet anybody on the weekdays, they play with each other at home, they have a garden.'
>
> *Was it different in Poland?*
>
> 'Oh, yes. We had a playground there and they were non –stop with other children playing football, cycling. Here it is different – I would not let them play outside or cycle here.' (Danuta, 2, works from home in small business, C)

All the Polish mothers I interviewed had rather sharp perceptions of the relationship between their home and the culture of the neighbourhoods where they reside, where their children attend school and where they socialise with other parents. Many of the mothers I interviewed, though highly educated, resided in areas considered to be deprived with mediocre schools. Ethnic minorities, and poor and illegal migrants typically occupy locations 'abandoned' by locals (Noussia and Lyons, 2009; Smith and Williams 1986). 23 of the 40 mothers who were interviewed in this study lived or still live in social housing and only a few lived in pockets of zones, which would not be defined as economically and socially disadvantaged. They might rent social housing properties from the local councils, own them or rent from private landlords. There was a mixture of stories how the Polish mothers I interviewed ended up living on council estates but often it happened through marrying into 'a council house' or obtaining it through a waiting list allocation. For instance Sonia (4, catering manager, B), who has a Master's Degree in Philosophy and Cultural Anthropology and works as a catering manager in London, explains: 'my former husband was on a waiting list to get council housing and when we married we received this flat'. Several participants rent ex-council properties, which are cheaper than other private houses but tend to be surrounded by council tenants.

Residing in areas which in the mothers' eyes are more economically and socially segregated than places where they used to live in Poland triggers reflections about changes in their social status as the mothers attempt to fit in and function within their new socio-cultural environment. Those changes affect their aspirations in relation to their children and shape their perceptions about Britain and schooling in the UK. Living in places which are described as poorer and with low, as opposed to high, cultural capital may also mean being physically near schools defined by educational bodies and the parents themselves as mediocre or with a predominantly working class intake. It requires time for the Polish mothers to notice this dynamic but soon after they realise the mismatch between their educational and social background and that of their English neighbours,

various tactics are being implemented to remedy this undesirable situation. Throughout almost all interviews the theme of difference between their children's experience in Poland and their experience in the UK was emphasised. Mina (1, casual jobs, C) recalls Polish times, with certain nostalgia:

> Here children are missing their childhood. In Poland they are dropping their bags at home and would just play outside, run to the lakes, to the playground, fishing with their dads, having fun. Here children are confined to small flats. I would never let Gabriel play outside by himself here. There are older children, there are black children, you see.. they are picking on the younger ones…I am afraid that something bad would happen to him. Children here are dangerous; children in Poland are different they are not so aggressive, they are more friendly…I don't know why children here have so much aggression in them. His childhood would be much happier in Poland (Mina,1, casual jobs, C).

This quote not only emphasises the perception of the 'lost childhood', which is simply due to a different social and cultural context, but also the very particular relationship with the cultural 'other' and fears associated with it. Those fears and an inflated social awareness in the case of some of the respondents have an impact on how they envisage their children growing up and their well-being in the UK.

In this chapter I discuss the mothers' emotional dealings with the social past in Poland and the present social setting in relation to their children's education and upbringing. It looks at mothers' position in their new environment and depicts various aspects of how the world around them is constructed, delineated, adapted and ultimately accommodated. I begin this analysis with the mothers' national and social liminality as this concept demonstrates the mind-sets of the disestablished lives and dissolved societal orders that they are exposed to. As migration is always a period of transition, characterised by being betwixt and between and Polish mothers in the UK are no exception to this. This experience of liminality is meaningful in the process of traversing to another stage (which here is another culture); the mothers are on their way to becoming settled, possibly permanent, residents in the UK and to fully participating in British life as 'citizens' of the British community, with all the aspects of social life that it brings.

5.1 Liminality

> *Where do you belong in terms of social class?*
>
> I will tell you I don't know, I do not know, it might be wishful thinking. If

somebody researched it in a scientific way – maybe middle class?

Why?

[Sighing]…because that is where we belonged earlier or maybe it is not like that at all, maybe we are much much lower here.

from an interview with Ada, (4, media researcher, C, 1st int.)

When dispositions are partly eroded and dismantled by exposure to novel external forces, the original, taken for granted and cohesive patterns of behaviour and practices cease to function as obvious and a norm. Newly acquired qualities begin to infringe the autochthonous set of values. In this precise moment identity is traversing beyond one cultural space to another by absorbing new habituses. This stage when habitus misfires may result in the state of liminal existence. Developed in social anthropology (by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner) by studying the ubiquitous rites of initiation as a category of cultural experience, *liminality* refers to in-between situations and conditions (also of movement from one space to another) that are characterised by the dislocation of established structures, the reversal of hierarchies, and uncertainty regarding the continuity of tradition and future outcomes (Horvath, Thomassen & Wydra, 2009). Liminality is characterised by ambiguity fluidity, and flexibility and its state has the potential to transform individuals emotionally and cognitively and therefore contributes to the formation of new structures, consequences and qualities in society.

According to Turner, liminality is experienced as a psychologically significant state when moving from one status or role in life to another in *rites de passages* (Turner, 1967). Whereas such form of liminality is institutionalised, it could be disputed whether moving from one culture to another with its cultural, social and economic aspects may be regarded as rite of passage, but undoubtedly for Polish migrant mothers it is a psychologically significant state of self-reflections, uncertainties and profound transgressions. It is the very moment when the habitus has the chance to 'misfire'. Liminality captures migrants' sense of living between two or more social spaces but not properly belonging to any of those spaces and shows their unremitting pursuit for their new identities. For the Polish mothers it is a psychologically significant moment of self-consideration, ambiguity and profound transgressions. The mothers' liminal ethnic and social positioning is particularly striking.

Mothers' ethnic and social liminalities demonstrate the mind-sets of disestablished lives and dissolved societal orders that they are exposed to. As for any migrant, it is a period of transition characterised by being betwixt and between and Polish mothers in the UK are no exception to this. This experience of liminality is meaningful in the process of traversing to another stage (here culture); mothers are on their way to become residents in the UK and to fully participate in its life as 'citizens' of British community, with all the aspects of social life that it brings.

National belonging in migratory circumstances dynamically undergoes changes. A clear-cut Polish identity (all the mothers I interviewed had Polish parents and were born in Poland) begins to be blurred by an array of overlapping new identities. For instance Sonia (4, catering manager, B) expresses her somewhat sentimental patriotic relationship with the country where she was born: 'I will always be Polish, I am so proud of my country. I have a business there, my parents, my friends are there, you know, it is the smell of my childhood there, I feel safe there'. At the same time she recognises a sense of 'dissolution of order' (Szakolczai, 2009) and a lack of definite borders of her belonging: 'However now I feel like a person without any background, I am not from there and not from here. Of course I have my flat on the council estate here and I feel OK here but nothing feels like my home any more'. As Simich, Maiter and Ochocka put it, 'liminality captures many immigrants' feelings of living in a hybrid cultural reality, existing between two social worlds, but belonging to neither' (2009: 262). This state of floating in the limbo of ethnicities may be perceived as undesirable while migrants search for their new identities. Lila (2, not in paid work, C) expresses the need for belonging, which is still lacking in her life:

> I would now like to be more settled here so I could feel that my home is here. It is not so bad anymore because I am not so keen on going to Poland any more or when I go there I really want to come back, but I do not feel yet this is where I entirely belong (Lila, 2, not in paid work, C).

Yet, losing touch with Poland and moving into multicultural spaces of London frequently results in the acquisition of new qualities; in the definition of liminality it is a process formative of institutions and structures. Ada's (4, media researcher, C, 2nd int.) reflection upon her new national status aptly captures this dynamic: 'Since I came to live in London, I have regarded myself as part of

a cosmopolitan class, my Polishness is fading away, my Polish is deteriorating'.

Social liminality appeared to be even more unsettling for my participants. As mentioned earlier, most of the interviewed Polish migrant mothers, though highly educated, lived in social housing in disadvantaged residential pockets with which they had difficulty to identify. Therefore, in this study, I refer this liminality to the transient condition of neither belonging to the deprived neighbourhoods of council housing, with mainly working class families nor to the residential areas of affluent middle class families. Apart from downgraded social status and inability to self-define themselves in terms of UK social class and social status, they start noticing the uncomfortable and strong differences in aspirations and lifestyles between them and their neighbours. Alina (4, clinical psychologist, B) who lives on an inner-city large council estate explains her current socio-economic residential status in this way:

> I don't belong to any class, I don't know what class I am in. I live in a council flat, like working class people, or well, not even working, more like people who have not worked for generations, but on the other hand I have a doctorate. I am a doctor of clinical psychology. In Poland it would be OK for a doctor to live in a block of flats on an estate [laughing] but here it doesn't happen often (Alina, 4, psychologist, B, 1st int.).

Uncertainty and hesitancy emanate through the Polish mothers' narratives about their class positioning in the new social context. They are insecure in establishing their status, partly because it has changed its normative meaning and partly due to their unfamiliarity with the social structure of their host society. The obvious measures qualifying them for specific social strata in Poland – the way they read Polish class structures (namely education which secures a place among the intelligentsia) have been ruptured by the move to the UK. For instance, a highly educated newly arrived migrant mother from a small town in Poland remarked that 'she didn't notice any social classes here' (Urszula, 2, waitress in pub, B, 1st int.). She clearly approaches her new context with a mind-set where class does not necessarily indicate lifestyle, assets, wealth or place of residence. In most cases this social *tabula rasa* does not last and mothers quickly learn cues and qualifiers of 'social standing'. They notice it is not only the level of education but also material assets, lifestyle, place of residence and, ultimately, the schooling ranks of schools, which their children attend. Vera (4, not in paid work, B, 1st int.), who lives in a high rise block on a notorious London estate, which is scheduled for demolition, contrasts the image of social segregation in both countries:

> I don't classify myself as any class and I know why - because by English standard I would be very working class and I think, also, we Poles are less bothered about social standing, maybe we are more bothered and troubled when we are in England? The English they bother more, there is more talk about it and people put fences around themselves if they are middle class. If you see the buildings there (shows me houses across the street) they are so well guarded by very high fences but I can still see there is this nice playground for children to play. It was not like that in Poland. If education was something that we would go by, then I wouldn't classify myself as working class but in economic terms - yes (Vera, 4, not in paid work, B, 1st int.).

Full of both risk and potential, liminality often involves a state of heightened awareness and self-realization (Simich et al., 2009). It also fabricates defence mechanisms against dissolving identity and in many cases, as was reflected in my interviews, this mechanism entails a quest for a middle way, for balance. Despite the fact that in economic terms it would seldom be appropriate to place Polish migrant families above the poverty line, the interviewed mothers tended to place themselves 'in the middle', or in the average position:

> I do not want to be posh like people for instance in Highgate, because we are not posh, we do not earn good money and I do not want him (Adam) to feel bad if we cannot sponsor his activities, holidays in France etc. Just as we would not feel well with dysfunctional families, so it must be balanced (Ada, 4, media researcher, C, 1st int.).

This perception of residential areas as segregated and the prevailing sensation that they do not belong to any of them is being transposed into the realm of schooling. While schools are perceived as institutions socially situated on the extremes of social (dis)advantage continuum, there is little left for the mothers who do not fit in either. The relatively uniform quality of primary schools, as reminiscent of their childhood, makes it difficult for them to make meanings of the socially and economically segregated secondary schools of London, which children start when they are 10 or 11. Greta (4, project manager, B), a highly educated mother who works in her own artistic profession in London, described her quest for a suitable secondary school for her son. After visiting a local non-denominational comprehensive, several faith schools and a couple of independent schools in Hampstead, she expressed her bewilderment and the feelings that her family would not fit socially into any type of schools in London:

> They [the schools] are all so incredibly different. The one around the corner, I was horrified- children screaming, speaking English but not the sort of English I learnt at school, all dark skin, most girls with scarves around their heads. When you look at facilities they are so bleak, no greenery, grey buildings. I simply cannot imagine Jacek attending this

> school. I am quite sure he himself would hate it (Greta, 4, project manager, B).

There is a universal view among my respondents that independent schools are an exclusive domain of the privileged and affluent section of society and hence making them inaccessible to the less wealthy citizens. Greta (4, project manager, B) continues her juxtaposing description of the schools she visited and implicitly brings up the question of her liminal status within this schooling field of power where individuals manoeuvre and compete in pursuit of desirable resources (Bourdieu, 1984):

> Mind you, I didn't like the private school either; all so posh and you can see people must be really wealthy to send their children there. Someone told me half of the school is Jewish but of course I do not know if it is true. Certainly my son would learn far more in this school but I don't think I want him to be different from all the rich kids and we would be different (Greta, 4, project manager, B).

Alicja (3, admin work, B, 1st int.) also notes the disparities in different schools by emphasising that she was the only one in her daughter's school who wore a suit, indicative of a non-menial profession. She claims that 'none of them (other parents) has a degree' and that 'everybody is doing cleaning jobs or some kind of manual labour'. By emphasising that the school of her child is socially homogeneous the mother highlights two important points, first that schools in her locality are segregated by class and second, that she does not belong to the social arena of Nela's school, being 'the only ‘white collar’ worker’ there. In her narrative there is an underlying proclivity towards mingling with people of a similar professional standing and a particular ethnic group and the same proclivity towards the schooling arena of her child. Albeit, when entry into the desired social group is attained, it can prove disappointing and bring unexpected drawbacks. Anna (1, casual jobs, B) talks about a lack of social connections after moving into a wealthy white middle-class suburb of London, where her new partner had a house:

> When I lived in Walhamstow, I always wanted to live among the white English.(..). I thought it would be different and the problems wouldn't be there. And there aren't but you see there is a different aspect - people live in mansions worth 2 million pounds, they wear expensive designer clothes. They drive Mercedes and spend all their time on make-up. I don’t feel comfortable here, I don't belong here. (…) They all turn up their noses at me, they are stuck up (Anna, 1, casual jobs, B, 2nd int.).

Anna, like many other mothers experienced subtle social omissions or more

overt exclusions Hence her resentment towards a group of well-off educated English parents, with whom she had previously so desired to mingle. Aniela (4, voluntary work, B), whose children attend a large, mixed school, described how she was treated when she visited one primary school in her local area, which she described as 'mainly middle class English, cold, posh and snobby'. She reports that, initially, the receptionist was very nice to her but as soon as Aniela provided her Moroccan surname, 'the lady wasn't interested in her anymore':

> It was so clear, that she didn't want to talk to me and I think it is because this school is not geared up towards foreigners (Aniela, 4, voluntary work, B).

Faltering over self-ascription due to the liminal status, may imply that the mothers themselves wouldn't be inclined to categorise and compartmentalise others in the society. Nonetheless, it does not prevent them from, at times, prejudicial, conceptualisations about others and perhaps indeed this serves as a measure delineating their belonging in order to survive in this social limbo. Presumably this practice may have a bearing on the mothers' strategies regarding education and socialisation of their children. The focus of the next part of this chapter is on how the mothers construct and qualify their own social position within the complex and little familiar social structures of British society. The construction of social markers here is based on: place of residence, level of education, behaviour and attitudes to school, Catholic upbringing, language, physical appearance and attitudes to parenting.

5.2 From delineation of belonging to theorisation

In the course of time during their migrant experience, mothers start to theorize their new localities, compare and next situate themselves in the new social constellation. Initially perceptions of polarised groups can be sharpened, even exaggerated. In my panel interviews, generally, during the second interview mothers expressed being more relaxed about their social standing and they reflected upon their initial stance as overreaction. As Alicja, who was very aware of her class ineptitude during our first interview, put it this way in the second interview: 'I ceased to compartmentalise this society and to try to catch up with the middle classes' (3, admin work, B, 2nd int.).

'Other' Pole

In a study of Class and Ethnicity among Polish migrants (Eade et al., 2007) many migrants reported concern about the negative behaviour of other Poles and although they interacted mainly with other Polish migrants in London, they were highly selective in choosing friends from specific groups within the Polish migrant community, such as those who came from a similar background to themselves or had attained similar levels of education. In a different study of Polish migrants in the UK carried out by Fomina, some Polish respondents felt there was a distance between them and a group of people who came to Britain at the same time but who differed from themselves not only in terms of their educational level, but also their unwillingness to learn English, and thus unwillingness to integrate. The 'other' Pole often entailed a 'pathological' element with which respondents in the study didn't want to be identified (Fomina, 2009). Speaking about other post-accession migrants from Poland, Maria (1, not in paid work, C) said:

> Well, so much cattle came. They cannot communicate in English and they are not at all cultured (…) We came here to Harrow to be far from Poles so we could learn some English (Maria, 1, not in paid work, C).

Notwithstanding the clear-cut demarcation boundaries that my participants were making, they felt a need to fit into the environments where they chose to exist and function as parents. Even though they were making highly evaluative statements about others in their neighbourhoods, community and school and distinguishing themselves from this alien environment, they still had to function in it, despite feeling that they did not belong. The lack of integrational well-being is more apparent when they operate as a minority, whether it be in terms of colour, language, mannerism or economic capital. Bauman, describes those distinguishable cultural values as established on the whole in the childhood years, guiding lives and as subconscious, which only become premeditated when confronted and challenged by others (Bauman, 1990). Also in my study it was shown that this is precisely what happens when newly arrived migrants are exposed to a wide array of diverse values, behaviours, perspectives and tastes among other parents in their children's schools. Being in the minority and being dissimilar and therefore conspicuous suddenly starts to bother them.

In my interviews mothers have provided ample evidence of subtly infiltrated reminders, both from school authorities and from members of the parent commu-

nity, of their special status as non-English members of the community. Mariola's (4, not in paid work, B) son attended primary school, which she described as predominantly white English. Arek was one of very few migrant children and although the family was widely accepted in the school and Arek's limited English well supported, Mariola, on several occasions, felt that she was being singled out. Other parents persistently kept asking her for the date of her return to Poland and even though she understood it was English 'small talk', she felt uncomfortable with the question. Mariola also sensed the different status when Arek's teachers every year would write in his report that ‘for a foreign language speaker he is doing well' (first interview). At one point Arek almost lost his place at his school when there was a misunderstanding, due to misleading rumours that the family was returning to Poland after the holidays.

Such inconspicuous but poignant reminders defeat any attempts of the mothers to fit into the ruling social vibe. When the *habitus*, which can be interpreted as an unconscious system of values, meets the unfamiliar, frictions can arise (Thorsen, 2000). The following quote shows how Lidia's habitus is preventing her from her desired participation in the new social field:

> I will always be 'the other', I open my mouth.. because I learnt English in Poland.. and before I finish my second word they will ask me ‘oh, where is your lovely accent from?’ And I have to pretend I am English but of course I can’t be English so I am trying to be more English than they are. It is a farce, the more I try, the more ashamed of myself I feel (Lidia, 4, university lecturer, B, 2nd int.).

It seems that the need to be surrounded by people of similar cultural and social background is a natural response to their lack of the capital, which belongs to the mainstream groups of the spaces in which the mothers operate. Bauman observes that 'us and them does not stand for two separate groups of people but for the distinction of two totally different attitudes – between attachment and antipathy, trust and suspicion, security and fear, cooperativeness and pugnacity' (1990: 40). The culturally close group is a natural habitat, the place where one likes to be and to which one returns with the feeling of relief (ibid, 40). In the US, migration of Polish migrants to wealthier suburbs is an escape from urban hell, but also and mainly, represents a desire to live with individuals of a similar social status (Posern-Zielinski, 1983). This would indicate that socio-economic identity may be stronger than ethnic identity. Here Aniela (4, voluntary work, B), in her search for her socio-cultural niche, refers to 'people like us' (in terms of the edu-

cational level) (Reay, Crozier and James, 2013) and illustrates the middle-class migrants' need to be surrounded by like-minded aspirational individuals:

> Before, around 6 years ago, they had much more people from poorer backgrounds. But as soon as the school became very good, more and more affluent parents started sending their children here. I am saying this because I am comparing the class of my daughter with the class of my youngest son. There are more people of better background, with some kind of education. Many of them are English or people like me - from different countries but having some education in their home countries (Aniela, 4, voluntary work, B).

5.3 Mothers theorising and accommodating their new localities[46]

> It was a closed estate, very elegant. Having lived there for eight months we never opened our mouths to anyone – no one has ever said hello, not even looked at us. I've heard that in Poland we already have such gated residences for the new-rich, but when I left we were all equal, so this concept was so difficult for me to understand. There were classes in Poland based on wealth, education, prestige but they co-existed and mixed (Lidia, 4, university lecturer, B, 1st int.).

Polish migrant mothers, wherever the circumstances have thrown them, whether it is a deprived council estate, quiet rural setting or affluent suburb, have to come to terms with their localities where they will encounter unfamiliar patterns of behaviour, of social relations and lifestyles. The majority of the mothers interviewed for this study lived in relatively disadvantaged pockets of London with properties at the lower end of the financial market's spectrum. Their children would attend inner London state schools with a predominantly working class intake. Albeit not wanting any bonds with these deprived localities and schools, they have to find their new place in them. This section of Chapter 5 examines the mothers' engagement with their neighbourhoods; current residence is usually regarded as a liminal and temporary measure because their success and their social position is always situated in the future, still ahead of them.

An important element of talking about their spatial and social localities was the transformed character of childhood, i.e. - the transformation, which Polish children have to undergo after moving to Britain. With some exceptions, mothers described childhood in Poland as associated with more freedom and plentiful social interaction. For instance Emilia (4, not in paid work, C) claims that 'Polish children have more freedom, more childhood, more playtime' than children in the

[46] In order to read this part with more thorough understanding refer to Case Study 1: Alina - experiences, fears, compliance in Appendix XIII

UK and whenever her son goes to Poland for holidays he 'has a bunch of friends, he plays outside until late with his friends because they have someone to play with and have somewhere to play.' In London they live in a street where 'on the other side there are houses, there is no playground or park nearby':

> Here children don't meet each other, there is no chance to come home, leave the backpack and go with friends to play football outside, there is no option of this. When the weather is good we sometimes meet in the park and they can play then. (..) Here education starts earlier than in Poland, children have more responsibilities (Emilia, 4, not in paid work, C).

Urszula (2, waitress in pub, B, 1st int.) points out that children, unlike in Poland, have limited social time after school and due to limited facilities and few green play areas they are confined to their small flats as it is not always feasible to socialise outside. Roza (2, not in paid work, C) complained that 'the nearest playground from here is 20 minutes away and she cannot go on her own'. Both mothers live in rented flats above commercial properties and, as Urszula (2, waitress in pub, B, 1st int.) comments, ‘they do not have a house with a garden and cannot swap children for playdates'. Nora (2, café owner, B) highlights another problem, which is affecting her daughter:

> Kalina is far away from all her friends and she can never meet them, it is so tiring. (..)I want her to have local friends but it is impossible to have both, a good school and friends nearby (Nora, 2, café owner, B).

In Poland it is common practice for parents to simply enrol their children at the nearest local school (Sales et al., 2008; Trevena, 2012) and this facilitates after-school socialising. In London in the quest for an acceptable school, children often become dispersed and live far away from each other, which hinders parent-free interactions with other classmates.

Plausibly, the concerns and anxieties about children's venturing outside social and geographical milieus are related to fears of unfamiliarity of new spaces and of unexplored, or inaccessible, cultural patterns of unknown 'others'. 'They' stands for a group to which one either cannot enter or does not wish to belong. The vision of what is going on in such spaces is thereby vague and fragmentary. According to Bauman the thinking goes on the following lines:

> 'I poorly comprehend its conduct and hence what the group is doing to me is, by and large, unpredictable and by the same token frightening. I am inclined to suspect that they repay my reservations and anxiety in the same currency, reciprocate my suspicions and resent me as much

as I disapprove of them' (Bauman, 1990: 40).

Parental fears stem from their observations of surrounding school and residential environments. A major concern for many highly educated mothers has been other parents' and children's incompatibility in the form cultivated and cherished cultural capital. Mothers quickly realise that children attending their children's schools usually belong to working class, or in many cases unemployed households. This hampers mothers' personal relations with other parents at school but they make efforts to socialise with parents, who, in other circumstances, would not attract their company. Alicja (3, admin work, B), whose 14 year old daughter attends secondary school now and independently makes her own friends, notes that ‘as she doesn't have to do any socialising for Nela now, she doesn't have to think about social class any more':

> I can finally choose my own friends, I don’t try to socialise with someone just because Nela was playing with their children. I did all that socialising but it was all so false (Alicja, 3, admin work, B, 2nd int.).

Ada (4, media researcher, C) perceives the intellectual differences between her son and other children in his class as a serious barrier in the future. Cultural capital makes it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from different social classes.

> Academic capital is in fact a guaranteed product of the combined effectiveness of cultural transmission by the family and cultural transmission by the school, the effectiveness of which depends on the amount of cultural capital directly inherited from the family
>
> (Bourdieu, 1984: 23)

Bourdieu claimed that he could break with the common-sense view which sees academic success or failure as an effect of natural aptitudes and reveal instead a more potent factor, the best hidden and socially most determinant educational investment, namely, the domestic transmission of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). In other words, what matters, is all the effort and work that parents put in forming their children. The mother is confident that for now she can safeguard and influence the formation of Adam’s cultural capital (interests and trajectories):

> If a child sees that parents read books it will take a book and read as well, if it sees that it is a way to spend free time it will do the same.. you see with this school, apart from the clubs that the school offers to those children, and it is normally 45 minutes a week, they do not have any stimulation at home. This is a barrier, they are interested in the most stupid things that one can be such as ‘Ben 10’ or what is fashionable but there isn’t positive stimulation. But I think at this stage our friends and us

> still have an influence on Adam so that he will be interested in the same things as us (Ada, 4, media researcher, C, 2nd int.).

Though Ada is not concerned about Adam's cultural and academic development she would like him to have a wider circle of friends from other social backgrounds and finishes her statement by saying that 'Adam doesn't have any other friends, these are the only friends he meets so it clearly is a barrier for me.' Nina (4, contract data analyst, A) sees it as a barrier for her rather than her son's social networks but her quote clearly captures irrational preconceived attitudes towards groups she regards as different:

> There are a lot of black girls in his class (whispering) Ok it is confidential so I can say whatever I want. I don't know I just don't think they are the kind of people I would relate to (Nina, 4, contract data analyst, A, 1st int.).

Almost all mothers resorted to comparing the behaviour of Polish children with children brought up in the UK, strongly favouring Polish conduct, described as good-mannered, disciplined and obedient. This difference is frequently put down to contrasting forms of upbringing and its sources attributed to lax school discipline in Britain. For instance in a guide for Polish parents of children in the UK schools produced by Lopez Rodriguez et al., the authors explain to the parents that discipline in British schools may seem more relaxed than in Poland but that it is important to behave appropriately (2010a). This only accentuates this idiosyncrasy. For instance Aniela (4, voluntary work, B), who works as a teacher in one of the Polish Saturday schools in London makes a sharp distinction between Polish children brought up in the UK and those who have recently immigrated from Poland. She thinks that 'children from Poland are much more polite than children who were brought up here, they have good manners and they know where to stop' and that 'children here do not have any boundaries, they know that they can do anything to us teachers but that we cannot do anything to them'.

There is a pervasive myth of Polish parents caring for their children better than other parents. Many mothers have highlighted the stereotype of 'Matka Polka'[47],

[47] Matki Polki – Romantic Polish writers were often using the Polish Mother as their theme, which attributed to her the fate of Poland (mother) and Polish citizens (children). One of the Polish Three Bards using this theme was the great Polish poet, Adam Mickiewicz, who in the poem 'To a Polish mother' attempted to create a model for educating young Poles. Mothers must prepare their sons for the battle to victory and sons have to fight knowing they will die.

as utterly devoted to her children and providing the 'right type of moral backbone' (Karina, 4, not in paid work, B). Kamila (4, not in paid work, B) notes that in the UK 'children are left to do what they want, just like the ‘social margin’ in Poland.' Shouting and a particular way of speaking have frequently been described as a mark of being different, more aggressive, argumentative and violent:

> The way they speak, you can see if they have education or not. Their behaviour - they swear, they shout, I am not saying they are all like that but if you look at the majority of working class they are like that (Aniela, 4, voluntary work, B).

> I have a neighbour, an English woman next door who is constantly in a state of alcoholic intoxication (...) Constant arguments, screaming, police, slamming the door, something I have never experienced in my life (Ada, 4, media researcher, C, 2nd int.).

One could look for the origins of the mothers' negative theorisations and deeply embedded fears about the future of their children in those differences in mothers’ perceptions. The upbringing and behaviour of children from neighbourhoods and their inappropriate attitudes to school are juxtaposed to the mothers’ own commendable attitudes. Kamila (4, not in paid work, B) who has a six year old daughter and lives in an area well known for knife crime incidents, describes her neighbourhood as ' dangerous: arguments, fights and last year a shopping assistant was killed'. She also adds that she 'fears that someone will attack Zuza or that something happens to her in the street'. Here one of my participants highlights a barrier, namely peer pressure, which is hampering her efforts to bring Roma up in the way the mother's cultural norms prompt her to do it:

> I am worried about them but I am trying to bring them up as I was brought up in Poland. Obviously they have their friends, their peers (and I am happy about that) so they want to behave in the same way. Now I am worried about Roma because she is going to secondary school and she will have to go to school by herself. And I can see how the young people here behave on the buses, girls are even worse than boys (Aniela, 4, voluntary work, B).

Various strategies to safeguard their children’s innocence and safety and to overcome these difficulties are developed by mothers. For example Urszula (2, waitress in pub, B, 2nd int.) mentions that Alek always has his watch and phone so that the parents can stay in touch. Greta (4, project manager, B) talks about escorting her son Jacek to the bus stop in order to eliminate the risk-prone short walk, which he would have to make on his own. Those tactics according to

mothers were not necessary in Poland, yet it is important to remember that my participants were often referring to the time when they were growing up.

Earlier in this chapter I have discussed the class perceptions and social self-awareness of Polish migrant mothers used by them as a mark of self-distinction. I will repeat here that discovering the make-up of British society is usually a lengthy process and mothers, as a rule, arrive with a Polish lens, in which class does not necessarily indicate lifestyle, assets, wealth or place of residence. For instance in her first interview, three months after arriving in the UK, Renata (2, not in paid work, C, 1st int.) was oblivious to all the issues surrounding social divisions claiming she 'has not noticed any classes here' and that she 'sees a human being according to who she likes and not how much money they have or where they live'.

In the course of time, my respondents start noticing and experiencing greater residential disparities. One of the mothers describes the manifestations of class divisions in the UK:

> Here it is so different from Green Gables. You see there you have all these typical English with an umbrella, elegant. My teacher was from Green Gables. But here it is very different, it's a ragbag, if you see a white person it must be a Pole, the rest it is Pakistani, Hindu and if there is an English person it is a rarity. In Green Gables there are nice, elegant cafes, restaurants, you can see couples having glass of wine. Not like here, here you only have Mc Donald's, fast food outlets. We cannot afford to go to a restaurant, to a cafe ...maybe that's why we are here and not there (Justyna, 1, not in paid work, C).

Justyna who lives in a notoriously socially divided area (on the more deprived side of the divide) indicates her feelings that, as a migrant, she legitimately belongs to this 'ragbag, full of fast food outlets, inelegant' world. The desirable side is white and English and the economic gap is impossible to overcome.

I introduced this part with Lidia's quote, in which she is comparing her temporary middle-class, Canary Wharf neighbourhood[48] with what she experienced in Poland. She sees the country she left behind as having more social mobility and in which various classes mingled. She notes that 'it was so much more likely to have relatives who were still living in the countryside and were educated only to

[48] Lidia went to live in a gated development after she moved to London and resorted to a property agent for help in finding housing. However, she soon realised that she couldn't afford this luxury accommodation. Moreover, it did not meet her expectations of multicultural London, which she rather favoured.

a certain level' and that 'we all lived next to each other and happily interacted' (1st int.).

This steadily growing social self-awareness experienced by mothers is important because it also has an impact on how they theorise schools. In the learning process my participants realised that schools, just like residential areas, are economically and culturally polarised and that in order to secure places for their children in schools regarded as good, they need to implement various measures which will be discussed in the later part of this chapter. They begin to construct an image of schooling in which intake of pupils has an impact on the academic level of teaching. Sonia (4, catering manager, B), who lives in a high rise block on a large council estate scheduled for demolition, gives an account of how she was choosing a school for her daughter after she realised that the school her daughter was attending did not meet her expectations:

> I applied to many schools, I searched for them on the internet, I walked into them, I visited schools, I observed playgrounds, uniforms; in fact you can tell a lot about schools from the uniform. In the 'green' school Hanna's uniform would cost £20 altogether while in the 'orange' school the hat alone would cost £21. Of course it is posh. The 'green' school looks like a typical council estate area school. The head wasn't nice to me at all when I spoke with her on the phone. When she met me and spoke to me face to face her approach changed 100%. She was explaining to me that the school has to push the parents to bring their kids to school (Sonia, 4, catering manager, B).

The mother successfully managed to move her daughter to the distant but desired 'orange' school and this move emphasises how meaningful the growth of social awareness can be; Sonia (4, catering manager, B) was desperately looking for a better schooling option for her child.

There were abundant narratives emphasising an ethnic and social divide in education and to illustrate I cite here a Polish mother who works in the UK as a doctor. Even though her practice is in an inner city ethnically mixed and disadvantaged area, she resides in an affluent middle class suburb. Her daughter attends school in which she is the only 'foreigner' and the mother is aware of her privileged status:

> Here everybody talks about educational equality but it is clear there is no equality here whatsoever, it does not work, these are the small, subtle things that make you realise that there is no equality, that there still is a huge division, for instance in terms of skin colour (Dorota, 4, medical doctor, C).

It is also a gradual process for the mothers to construct explanations why inner-city schools, where their children attend, have a low academic level. Lila (2, not in paid work, C) from Luton wonders whether 'the level of school is not lower in terms of learning because children come from families that do not care about education and the school adjusts the level of teaching to those children'. At the same time the mother justifies and legitimises her daughter's presence in this school, making it possible for her to function in such environment: 'but on the other hand, there are groups of abilities'. Julia (4, project assistant, C) who lives in an affluent enclave of inner-city London comments on another dynamic which she noticed only after a few months of living in the area. In her view local private schools drain the local comprehensives of talent.

> This is a very wealthy area and all wealthy children go to private schools so to the state ones - you can imagine (Julia, 4, project assistant, C).

Importantly, it is very unlikely that the mothers would have those reflections living in Poland, first due to the relatively balanced socio-economic school intake, second because in schools in Poland streaming is not on the agenda[49] (Sales et al., 2008; Lopez Rodriguez et al., 2010; ibid., 2010a).

I have already mentioned that fears are born of unfamiliarity and mothers have concerns about letting their children play outside. Bad experiences may affect their views on their children's education and their future. This unfamiliarity and bad experiences produce voices of a strong desire to leave deprived areas. Some manage to step beyond and settle in more desirable zones; for instance Urszula, (2, waitress in pub, B) during our first interview lived in a one bedroom property above commercial premises in the high street, while two years later, the second time I met her, the family was renting a two bedroom flat in a new residential gated development. She explained to me that they 'were looking for something bigger, a proper two bedroom apartment' and that they 'were looking for something quieter, more residential and safe'. This, as it will be shown later, brings a new set of issues, which need to be negotiated through their migrant identities and status.

[49] In Poland all children are expected to fulfill the same objectives and reach similar levels; work sheets are not differentiated and there is no streaming according to ability. All Children get the same homework, not like in the UK, where it usually matches their abilities and the levels they have achieved.

On many occasions I heard voices of mothers complaining of being a minority in their children's schools or areas in which they were residing. This minority status has various facets and ethnicity is one of them. Some, for example, would be commenting on their children being the only white pupils in their class. Others, needless to say very few, were the only non-English children in their all English class (Mariola from Bromley, Dorota and Halina from the suburbs of Manchester). Yet being a minority may signify being few and different in various statuses; material (usually having more limited resources than others), employment (contrasting themselves with others relying on social welfare), education (as being better educated than others in the neighbourhood or children's schools). Ada's (4, media researcher, C) words aptly capture all of those realms of functioning as a minority:

> He (Adam) is a minority in his class, among 30 children, four are white, the rest black, some mixed but mostly asylum seekers; it does not disturb me at this stage. (..) there are poor people who haven't worked for the last three generations. I think that education does not have any value for them (Ada, 4, media researcher, C, 2nd int.).

Ada developed strategies to cope with this undesirable status and points out that 'it doesn't disturb her at this stage' (her son was in a Reception Class at the time of the first interview). When prompted to explain this statement, she retorted that ethnic composition is not important yet because:

> (…) like in this school here, when he is an absolute minority and only a few are white. I am talking about colour. It is normal that children tend to get together with their own kind when they are around 10 (Ada, 4, media researcher, C, 1st int.).

For Anna (1, casual jobs, B) no scenario is ideal. While in the previous place of residence (Hackney large council estate) her minority status was marked by the different (better) behaviour of her daughters, in the new one (affluent suburb of London with mainly semi-detached houses and villas), she sticks out from the crowd as poorer than other neighbours.

> Here children are behaving better. In the former school they were swearing, shouting, showing off and here it is nothing like that. Here there are people who, unfortunately for me, have lots of money (Anna, 1, casual jobs, B, 2nd int.).

Significantly, the fact that 17 of my participants spoke about being minorities in whatever form, only highlights the ethnic and class divide across London's, if not the UK's, schools and neighbourhoods. In the UK, class and race intertwine in

school choice decisions (Vincent & Ball, 2006). Lupton and Sulivan (2007) note, that residential patterns and school choice decisions certainly lead to wide differences, even within boroughs, in the social and ethnic composition of schools. London schools are more segregated by race than are the areas in which they are situated (Burgess in Lupton and Sullivan, 2007) indicating some racial sorting in school admissions. Also Drinkwater et al. (2006) note that despite the Poles' strong perception that Britain was a meritocratic society, most of the sample thought that London was divided along ethnic and racial lines and more than half believed that being white was important in British society and that it was an asset both in the labour market and in being accepted socially.

5.4 Stigmas, stereotypes and self-censorship

Erving Goffman defined stigma as an attribute that is deeply discrediting and that reduces the bearer from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one (1963: 3). In sociological theory stigma came to be an attribute, behaviour, or reputation, which is socially discrediting in a particular way; it causes an individual to be classified by others as undesirable and rejected. Stigmatisation puts invisible barriers in interactions with others. Earlier, on various occasions, I have discussed the stigma of unemployment and of living on council estates linking it with both self-stigmatisation and of others. Here I will describe and analyse how this pattern contributes to self-censorship among the mothers I interviewed and why it can be limiting in the process of integration. Social housing, education, discourses around multiculturalism and migrant 'spoilt' identity will be explored in this part.

The place of residence, namely social housing has been a constant thread present in the narratives of the mothers. Within a pathological discourse, social and urban problems are understood largely as a result of the spatial concentration of a poor ‘underclass’ (Hastings, 2004). Murray (1990) notes, that members of the underclass can be distinguished from the rest of society not simply by their relative poverty (or unemployment in my participants' narratives), but by their behavioural distance from mainstream norms, values and conduct. Also Cole, Kane and Robinson (1999) describe how popular culture in the UK tends to ‘demonise’ the inhabitants of deprived social housing estates. Likewise, as I have exhaustively described earlier in this chapter, the ten Polish mothers who did speak about council housing in a derogatory manner in this study, would associate them with the underclass, distinguished not only by relying on the social wel-

fare system but also on behaviour which would set the Poles apart from this group.

Notwithstanding, many of my respondents (23) lived in social or ex-social housing themselves (either as council tenants or renting ex-council properties within the private market) and consequently reflected upon their own social standing within those spaces. Residing in them is a cause of shame and stigma and which is undesirable but which simply is a necessity. In Alicja's assertion there is lots of unresolved and ambivalent attitudes about where she lives.

> I have a nice housing association house which doesn't belong to me, it is a government property. It is a very good quality house in a prime location and English people, if they come here, they get pissed off because they had to buy their own houses and they have a mortgage and I am living here and do not need to have a mortgage (…) but if I could buy a property I would love to swap rather than living in a housing association. There is a slight stigma of living in social housing but everybody is different (Alicja, 3, admin work, B, 2nd int.).

Even though she shows affirmative attitudes towards living in her 'prime location' house among professional neighbours, she still makes assumptions that her place of residence may have a negative impact on social interactions and causes preconceptions.

> (..) but I have lovely neighbours who are professional, who are from all over the world and I am open. You see I know this Czech girl who has a private property in Battersea and I also know that even though she is my friend she does not want her husband to be friends with us as a couple because of where we live (Alicja, 3, admin work, B ,1st int.).

Occasionally, this burdensome shame and degraded status can infiltrate personal relationships and hinders development of human interactions on the most fundamental level. Functioning with this self-reproach and guilt of 'being a failure' (Hastings, 2004) can trigger even further social segregation and self-closing off. Alina (4, clinical psychologist, B) who works as a clinical psychologist in London constructs an invisible but powerful barrier between her and her work colleagues. This internalised stigma can eat away self-esteem by persuading us that we are breaking away from the norms accepted within our immediate community. Here Alina talks about her minority residential status, namely living in a council block:

> You see it is some kind of stigma, I wanted to invite people from my work but I would have to think twice. Maybe it is my imagination but all these comments that they would make; for instance I was doing a lot of

> home visits with my supervisor and he would say: 'look at this smashing car in the middle of a council estate!' I am sure if I told him that I lived on a council estate he would be so embarrassed (Alina, 4, psychologist, B, 1st int.).

On the one hand, Polish migrant mothers have articulated being subjected to subtle manifestations of being discriminated and experiencing social segregation and closure. Theoretically they condemn discrimination, but on the other hand, they reproduce prejudice and intolerance and associate themselves with a specific group: the educated, cultured and relatively well-off. The stigmatization of the long-term unemployed parents who usually have few educational qualifications, is a strong feature of the migrants' perceptions. Yet, their relationship with the idealised 'moulded of different clay' (Ola, 2, not in paid work, B) professional group of English parents are not unproblematic or deprived of prejudices and inhibitions. Educated migrants implicitly self-describe and self-classify themselves as belonging to the professional group, but their fervent unconstructive judgements imply tension and an underlying conflict. For instance Alicja (3, admin work, B, 1st int.) finds herself socially alienated from the majority of the low-educated parents at school and at the same time from the affluent middle-class English parents in the playground who allegedly do not accept her.

Although interrelations with other groups are analysed elsewhere, here I only want to accentuate the very complex and intricate relationship that they hold with the English. Many of my participants commented on the culture of understatements and nuances, which requires a process of British socialisation, which, the Polish mothers, brought up in Poland, had not gone through. This uneasy interaction was also explored by Ryan (2010) and Ryan et al. (2008). In these studies, English people were constructed by Poles as difficult to 'read', private, closed off and hence difficult to get to know (Ryan, 2010). Klara (4, not in paid work, B), describing her rapport with other English mothers recognises her status as exceptional. Her narrative also demonstrates the immense amount of effort that goes into keeping up appearances ('they see') and proving that Poles can keep up with the settled, native English who are equipped with the mainstream cultural capital:

> I wouldn't like to leave all this here; I have great friends, also English mothers who help me when needed. Wala is friends with their children, we go to each other's houses, I do not feel inferior. And I know that some other Polish mothers can be quite alienated and isolated not being accepted, particularly by the English. But I think that *they see* that my children are cared for, that I try to give them a good education.. I

> don't think they can reproach me with anything (Klara, 4, not in paid work, B).

The mothers reject the 'uneducated other' as abnormal and undesired. They unconsciously seek out a comfortable and desired social niche for their children. It is as if the migrant mothers are escaping being labelled, by stigmatising others. In Goffman's words (1963) the stigmatised play the role of stigmatisers. This is manifested by frequent, callous comments about other minorities or educationally or even visually 'irregular' individuals. The stigma of being atypical, different from the mainstream, is a risky business when a migrant yearns to create a normal appearance of being a legitimate and valuable member of a community. This happens through the reinforcement of their 'disparate-superior' position (e.g. their whiteness, Catholicism, educational and cultural capital) and by mental and bodily segregation from those commonly regarded as carrying the stigma.

This far-reaching resentment and contempt for the group of parents, identified as the opposite of highly educated classes likely to succeed educationally, seems to be a sign of a struggle to escape marginalization and self-elimination. Renata (2, not in paid work, C) first gives an account of undesirable company for her five-year old son and later points out how she managed to escape the stigma of the group being stigmatized by her.

> If all but six children in a class, if they all live in council flats . . . If they all live on benefits and only look for opportunities to smoke or drink . . . and then all those children go to a school where all the other children are from a ghetto . . . you know here we have council flats and when I see a five-year old going to school by himself I get shivers. The current school is a smaller school and it made a very good first impression, it is all tidy and neat and all the teachers are friendly and nice, I want Romek to learn English from the English so he can have a proper accent. Black people here do not speak with a British accent (Renata, 2, not in paid work, C, 1st int.).

Her observation also reveals her condemnatory stance towards other minorities and rejects her son being among them as he would not learn 'proper English'. She implies that the small, tidy and neat school as opposed to the 'concrete moloch', as she described it in our interview is attended by 'the English' and not by other groups, whose learning of English may be in the initial stages. Paradoxically, her own son Romek represents one of those children she fiercely stigmatises – he speaks very little English and is not able to offer to other children what the mother expects – 'a proper British accent'. Lack of familiarity with diversity

and multiculturalism among Polish migrants has been already highlighted in the study carried out in 2008 (Sales et al., 2008). It has been noted that Polish national identity has been constructed around identification with Catholicism and a myth of homogeneity. This limited experience of dealing with other cultural groups and the ethnicity of Poles deployed as forms of precious capital will be explored in more detail further. Here I want to draw attention to how the Polish mothers' pernicious perceptions of other cultures, religions or, often perceived in terms of colour, individuals, can contribute to building fences before the interaction or conflict takes place. Not having the chance to interact they a priori reject the undesired other. Roza (2, not in paid work, C) for example has never encountered Hasidic Jews before and had limited knowledge of them but when asked if she has any sympathies/antipathies about other nations she seemed to be overwhelmed by unfamiliar and exotic practices:

> I don't really have any antipathies but once I went somewhere to the north London where my husband's brother lives and I saw orthodox Jews. I couldn't believe that the women were shaved and that they wear wigs. I was staring at them from the window, there were plenty of them. I was taking photographs. I found it so incredible (Roza, 2, not in paid work, C).

There is another kind of stigma, the one of having a 'spoilt identity' (Goffman, 1963) that is, seeing oneself as 'the other', because of being 'the migrant'. Self-reflecting upon what is seen in their minds as 'inferior positioning' functions as an alibi, a form of excuse for not being equal within the social field of power struggle (Bourdieu, 1993). It is this state of being an outsider in which the desired and projected normality and good life must be different and sometimes impossible. On the one hand, the stigma of being an unwelcome newcomer can fabricate feelings of self-limiting apprehension and inactivity. Edyta's (3, project assistant, C) narrative aptly illustrates how her imagined self-stigma of functioning as an unwelcome migrant impacts on her relationships with others. She constructs a sophisticated theory around her alleged belonging in a response to a potentially innocent query about her origin.

> The question where people come from…when I came here I heard so much that Poles are very unwelcome here and so often I face this question 'where are you from' which I consider very rude and very inadequate. I never ask this question. When somebody, especially from England asks me during our first meeting where I am from, then I immediately withdraw; it is a matter of establishing – 'are you or are you not?' It is not that maybe you are from an interesting country but it is 'you are another immigrant' here (Edyta, 3, project assistant, C).

Yet, on the other hand, conversely, this stigma of being 'other' - 'we will always be migrants here' (Lila, 2, not in paid work, C) - and being discredited, may trigger reactions in the form of being zealously proactive to escape the stigma and applying various means to alleviate a feeling of inadequacy. This may be indeed a response to the relentless need to improve status and a reaction to this discreditation of having the stigma of a stranger attached to one.

Sadly the 'spoilt identity' may have a far-reaching and detrimental effect on the negotiations of one's identity. In two interviews I found that the mothers, ashamed of their Polish descent, ceased talking in their native language to their children. For instance Alicja (3, admin work, B, 1st int.), socially extremely self-aware spoke of an incident in a park when an English mother, who, when she noticed Alicja spoke Polish to her daughter Nela, turned away from them. Consequently, after this disturbing experience Alicja started speaking English to her daughter. Today Nela cannot communicate in Polish.

Also Anna (1, casual jobs, B), after moving to a white English suburb with her two daughters spoke of their embarrassment when the mother spoke Polish. The mother decided to censor her expression during social interactions and since than spoke English to them:

> Now I speak English to them (..) they don't want me to speak Polish to them, they are embarrassed. For instance once I was screaming at Pola in Polish and she was saying 'can't you speak English to me?'. They speak rather poor Polish, it is not fluent, they have difficulties to speak on the phone. I wanted to enroll them to a Polish school but it is very expensive (Anna, 1, casual jobs, B, 2nd int.).

5.5 Crossing boundaries[50]

Even though defining 'self' and 'other' constitutes a significant barrier to intercultural encounters, as my interviews have shown mothers do venture beyond their cultural circles and localities. This practice usually becomes activated when there are visible benefits for their children's future and when it operates as a step up on the social ladder. Crossing boundaries is understood as a spatial movement where individuals venture to other geographical spaces and where

[50] In order to extend the understanding of this section, refer to Case study 2; Vera, (4, not in paid work, B) - strategizing in Appendix XIII

this spatial transgression is accomplished for the sake of cultural or social trespass. Venturing into other cultural spheres, particularly among more educated or aspirational mothers, functions as a survival strategy when they are forced to function physically in social circles with a distinct form of cultural capital from the ones they identify with. Also, the majority of my respondents showed great determination to cross the boundaries of their current socio-economic situation and to confront a seemingly remote reality. Limited resources, deprived neighbourhoods, restricted opportunities, lack of economic capital cannot prevent them from implementing strategies, which would help them to cross the boundaries of economic deprivation and succeed in the long term.

This process of crossing boundaries may be performed on many levels. One of the mothers (Aniela, 4, voluntary work, B), who married a Moroccan national, converted to Islam asserting that she 'wasn't pushed to do it', she just 'agreed with it' (religious level). Some mothers searched for friendships, networks and children's activities outside the confines of their neighbourhoods (networks level). Vera deals with the risk of her two daughters 'sinking into crime', as she put it:

> Viva has more and more hours of swimming but her results at school are still really good so it didn't impact on her academic side so I am very happy; they [both daughters are competitive swimmers] are healthier, fitter, they do not do things that are not good for them such as hanging around on the estate like other kids here (Vera, 4, not in paid work, B, 2nd int.).

Another tactic for going beyond the little desirable neighbourhoods is trying to place children in schools outside the vicinity of where they live, in more affluent catchment areas (physical mobility level). As this is a vital part of the mothers' quest for their cultural niches, the next section of this chapter will explore the practical aspect of finding 'good' schools. Ryan et al. (2007a) point out that many of the participants in their study about migrant networks lived in ethnically diverse areas of London but had little or no contact with neighbours. Even when Poles created tight-knit bonds with other ethnics, there remained another problem, that of distrust and competition for scarce resources among Poles themselves (ibid.). These two problems presumably also trigger the urge to push boundaries of their ethnic (Polish) or spatial (neighbourhood) circles. Those with strong cultural capital arriving in London without social or family networks found it easier to access and open networks quickly, including horizontal and vertical weak ties. Linguistic abilities, employment within ethnically diverse workplaces,

and the ease of mobility across a range of social, cultural and physical environments all serve as an opportunity to augment thick bonds with vertical and horizontal bridging social networks (Ryan et al., 2007). The authors conclude that, in line with Bourdieu's analysis, it is apparent that economic and cultural capital can facilitate wider networking and so enhance access to support and resources.

In only 5 cases (Mariola, Nora, Dorota, Halina, Karina) among my participants, are there fewer rather than more barriers to this social and spatial transgression. For example Halina (4, medical doctor, C) works as a medical doctor in Manchester and lives in its middle-class affluent suburbs. Her Polish husband is also a doctor. She is fluent in English and has sufficient economic resources to secure the well-being of her seven year old son in his new school. Apparently, she blends with the crowd in the vicinity in educational and economic aspects. Her different cultural background (she arrived only eight months prior to our interview) is a boundary to step over but she crosses it painlessly. It is important to add that Jacek is the only non-English child in his class and the area where she lives consists almost completely of middle-class, white, English families. She, as she herself notes, is 'treated as a curiosity'. Here Halina (4, medical doctor, C) talks about her efforts to help her son integrate into his new school:

> I organised various activities for him - tennis, athletics, trampoline. The mums of his friends helped me to organise them, they told me about everything. The mothers helped me a lot in the assimilation; his problem was that he could not get into any group of friends and the mums here organised an integration evening in the pub and I met some other mothers there and the sons of two of my friends took care of him. Now he goes to sleepovers and to birthday parties (Halina, 4, medical doctor, C).

The adaptation process is not always as effortless. Alina (4, clinical psychologist, B), who lives in London, spoke about the self-conceived stigma of a Polish migrant, about the limited resources which preclude her from moving out from the abhorred by her council flat and about her lack of insider knowledge which prevented her son from going to his chosen grammar school. Interestingly, she also commented on how welcome she felt as a Polish migrant when she arrived to the UK, 13 years ago: 'I am not an attractive and exotic Polish wife any more, I am one of hundreds of thousands' (4, clinical psychologist, B, 1st int.).

Yet, the barriers discussed above are too feeble deterrents to prevent my participants from trying to implement strategies, which would remedy the deficiencies

and problems, which they are facing.

The Polish community does not represent a stimulating social milieu for many of the educated migrants as they tend to transcend the boundaries and venture in search of a challenge. Besides, the ethnic community cannot offer much in terms of newly acquired values. Sword (1996) maintains that the drive for educational achievement (moving away to fields where educated English manoeuvre) inadvertently eroded this community – the educated drifted away.

One mother from inner London describes how she looks for company for both herself and her son among people of similar cultural capital. Distance and cost are not powerful enough to deter her from crossing the cultural boundary of her disadvantaged surroundings in search for 'People Like Us'.[51]

> We had a drama class run by I think the council or something because it was only £1.50 per session but we went only once. It was , how should I put it, rough? Children were misbehaving, there was no structure to it, they didn't have any proper costume. Milosz didn't like it himself, maybe because the children all knew each other. So we went to a proper drama school which is pretty far away but where it all is professional. I know it costs ten times more but I still think it is worth it. And the parents I met there they are lovely, a few Polish mums and an international crowd really (Greta, 4, project manager, B).

I have earlier elaborated on how mothers, providing the example of Aniela (4, voluntary work, B) on p. 116, searched for people with whom they could identify in some way among the working class or little educated constituent of the schools which their children attended. Maria (1, not in paid work, C), when talking about social circles she relates to in her children's primary school 'full of parents on benefits', mentions a friendship with a mother who teaches in a college. Maria claims she does not impose topics for conversation but they always find common themes and the mother is very interested in Polish customs. Vera (4, not in paid work, B, 1st int.) notes that she only gets on with teachers and humorously adds that ' the headteacher is her best friend there' [in her children's primary school].

As I mentioned earlier, moving children to more desirable, usually academically

[51] According to some research, social segregation in schools stems partly from the fact that many middle-class parents want a middle-class peer group (PLU) for their children, in the belief that this will benefit their personal and academic development (Vowden, 2012).

stronger (in the mothers' eyes) schools, is an important feature of crossing the social, spatial and cultural boundary. Such schools are, as a rule, further away from where the families live but still regarded as worth going 'the extra mile'. Culturally they can also provide a change; from a very multicultural to a predominantly white composition (Maria), from a working class and unemployed to overwhelmingly middle-class, well qualified element (Greta, Sonia) or from poverty stricken to above average affluent parents (Lidia, Anna). Most Polish mothers, particularly in the period immediately after arrival from Poland, are primarily adamant about the *academic outcomes* that educational settings may or may not provide which automatically determine their children's future (Lopez Rodriguez, 2005). Notwithstanding, some of my participants were concerned about *ethnic imbalances* and opt for schools with an ethnically balanced pupil composition. At times this trend touches on a somewhat challenging relationship with multiculturalism that many Polish migrants manifest. Further, many were, more or less overtly, expressing their concerns about *social class* incongruity and evidently treating schooling as 'a mechanism through which the middle-classes can close themselves off from the working classes' (Vincent, Ball & Kemp, 2004: 237). Maria (1, not in paid work, C), for example, commented that her son Witek after moving to a Catholic school in which there were very few other children in the early stages of learning English, picked up the language very quickly and after a month could communicate. Indeed, many mothers expressed the preference for their children being among other English speaking children rather than being clustered with other Polish pupils. Undoubtedly, such strategy secures better prospects for the children in the future but possibly children are also regarded by the parents as a link to the other side of the divide:

> This year he certainly learns more, it is much stricter. In the other school there was a racial cross-section, here there are more English, born here. There are also Irish, Spanish and, in the parallel class, there are other Polish children. We speak Polish at home and as he is still learning I would prefer him to be among English speaking children rather than be with Polish and speak Polish (Renata, 2, not in paid work, C, 2nd int.).

Bogna (3, bookshop assistant/waitress, B) describes how she was choosing between two, academically strong but disparate in terms of social composition, schools in the neighbourhood:

> So I chose these two schools and at the end I checked everything and asked people and they said that St Michael's was better so I sent Ania to that school…what really put me off from St Paul's was someone told

> me about Greenwood families ruling in this area… because my husband was brought up here and he said: please do not send her there because there are all those families - they have like five sisters and brothers and they never come out of prison (Bogna, 3, bookshop assistant/café worker bookshop assistant/café worker, B, 1st int.)

Although switching schools to more desirable ones is a rather attractive and effective mechanism of crossing boundaries and a sound platform for potential transgression (the process of transgressing in migratory pursuits is examined in Chapter 6), it is not always carried out without reservations and sacrifices. Just as refugee children and asylum seekers often lead turbulent lives and need to develop great resistance to their changing or, at times dramatic circumstances (Rutter, 2001), such migrant children may also be affected by uprooting, disorientation and the altering landscapes of faces, languages and cultures (Sales et al., 2008). Ada (4, media researcher, C, 1st int.) displayed strong determination to change her son's school but realising that Adam was moved between three countries (Poland, Norway and the UK) and had already attended two primary schools in London, she feared that it would cause him stress and that it would not be easy. There were other barriers mentioned by mothers who moved or planned to move schools. Distance, entailing long and tiresome journeys was one of the most important barriers about which they talked to me. Further, the lack of local friends who, unlike her daughter Kalina, would attend schools in the neighbourhood and socialise together is well captured in the aforementioned Nora's (2, café owner, B) account on p.117. She also adds that ‘travelling to school is not a problem anymore, I got used to it; it takes about 35 - 40 min on the bus, altogether, it takes one hour' Significantly, this would be a very unusual journey time for children in primary schools in Poland. Finally, on several occasions, the cost of transport was mentioned as a deterrent to move children to more distant schools. Ola (2, not in paid work, B) commented that she could only think of changing schools when free bus journeys for children were introduced.

Crossing boundaries, whether spatial, social or cultural, which results in personal transgressions, always carry a follow-up element of self – reflection. Anna (1, casual jobs, B) pinpoints transformations affecting the whole family when she revisits the past left behind:

> Now when we return to Parliament Heath, they both hold my hand. They are scared: *'mum it is so dirty here, it stinks'*. Here it is very clean compared to Parliament Heath. We go on a bus and they notice that there they shout on buses, that it is filthy and it stinks and that here everything is more civilized (Anna, 1, casual jobs, B, 2nd int.).

5.6 Thinking class: class matters

> When I came here I heard from other people that this was such a classed, segregated society (Lidia, 4, university lecturer, B, 1st int.).

I have demonstrated above that migrant mothers' feelings of awkwardness are not only linked to their ethnicity or linguistic distinctiveness but also to their migrant fluidity of social self-ascriptions. Undoubtedly class has bearing on self and others' perception and also on interactions and on social ties, which the mothers develop. When this class identity is troubled because of being constantly in flux, its negotiation becomes even more conspicuous (Sword, 1996). Class is not in itself an immensely divisive force in the deployment of tactics used by the mothers for bringing educational success to their children. But it does matter in how they theorise their neighbourhoods and how they reconcile their social positioning within it. Much of the mothers' thinking about class is performed in the retrospective context of their social standing in Poland. This is how Lidia contrasts her experiences with the ones in Poland:

> It hits me occasionally: 'who where you in Poland?' But in Poland we didn't have classes!! I was just a daughter of educated parents. I was a child of the intelligentsia but from very rural roots, my immediate ancestors were peasants (Lidia, 4, university lecturer, B, 1st int.).

Values, which guide our lives, are more often than not, sedimented at a subconscious level. Those values are so internalised that the influences, which formed them are forgotten and no longer perceived as outside pressures. They only come to the surface 'when they are challenged, defied and called to legitimize themselves' (Bauman, 1990: 119). The confrontation with an unfamiliar set of values allows multiply identities to be formed and this is frequently the effect of migratory revelations, in this case about the mother's ambiguous social positioning.

Discovering class subtleties in the UK is a gradual process for the mothers. The fact of living in a block of flats on an estate, shortly after arriving from Poland, is considered as a commonplace, ordinary practice. With time, perceptions or bitter experiences, it can become a blemish on their status and a reason for shame. Alina (4, clinical psychologist, B) told me a story of a middle-class mother of Alina son's best friend at school. The mother repeatedly asked Alina if she didn't feel her place wasn't 'a bit rough'. The mother herself lived in a semi-

detached house across the road and was not keen on her son socialising with children from the estate. She also had difficulties believing that a clinical psychologist can live in such setting. Alina comments:

> Here certainly people are much more segregated into what they do or where they live. Over generations they absolutely classed their society, they make so many assumptions. Over time I have learnt to be ashamed of living in a council estate, it is like a stigma (Alina, 4, psychologist, B, 1st int.).

Greta (4, project manager, B) also lives in social housing in inner London but it seems she has developed coping strategies. In her interview, she constantly delineates her non-belonging by ridiculing other residents. She is also one of the participants who, by any means, reaches out beyond her estate. For example she categorically rejects the possibility of her two children playing in the local playground and they both attend a school in an affluent area. She introduces a very stringent and somewhat condemnatory division between herself and other council tenants. She stresses 'the otherness' of the majority of her local neighbourhood and emphasises the inability to relate to them, putting it down to their linguistic manner and their alleged aloofness. Again she contrasts Polish social mingling with the UK spatial polarisation of wealth and lifestyles:

> I live in a council block and I have some funny neighbours. They all look as if they were badly treated by life. I shouldn't really be so prejudiced but I am saying this because I simply cannot relate to them. Even though I speak English, I have difficulties to understand their accent and anyway it seems they wouldn't want to talk to me anyway. They are so reserved to foreigners. This would never happen in my small town in Poland, there would be people from all walks of life living in one block of flats and we would at least have the potential to become friends (Greta, 4, project manager, B).

Alicja also highlights how important social and material status is in creating social ties. Interestingly the mother herself acknowledges her judgmental preconceptions as a novelty, as her new British feature and as a self-limiting predicament. In her second interview, even though she incessantly claims she has a far more lax attitude to social self-ascription, she recognizes that she 'still has this slight thing about class' and her narrative is profuse in hierarchical nomenclature:

> I have this Argentinean friend who comes from a working class in Argentina but she married this English guy who is upper middle class and who is an artist. I am friends with her but I don't know him and I don't know how he would take the fact that I live in a housing association flat. He hangs out with all the rich people from Chelsea. I might be misjudging him but I don't have any need to be friends with him. You see this is the

> thing about class in the UK, I am assuming he might not want to socialise with us because of that (Alicja, 3, admin work, B, 2nd int.).

Mariola (4, not in paid work, B) reflects upon her son's Saturday Polish school and notes that all educated parents withdrew their children from the school and that 'the parents who come now, are parents with low paid jobs'. Finally she concludes with a statement, unlikely to be expressed in her country of origin: 'maybe it is because of the area, it is so deprived'. The process of becoming aware of class polarisation and the growing status self-awareness is also illustrated in Mariola's concern how she is treated by other, mostly white English, parents at her son's school:

> They perceive us as the migrants who lower the level of the school. I can see their reactions that I don't have to work and that I can look after Arek; it is as if they were telling me that if they know any Poles they are always cleaners…Several times I was asked when we were planning to return home (Mariola, 4, not in paid work, B, 1st int.).

The majority of the mothers in this sample live on, or near, fairly deprived council estates in rented or ex-council properties and their children attend inner-city, culturally mixed schools with children of predominantly working class backgrounds. Nina (4, contract data analyst, A), together with a few other mothers[52] somehow sticks out from the crowd; she lives in a relatively affluent neighbourhood, socialises with parents who, as she herself describes, are educated and wealthy. Her son attends a local county primary school where the majority of the children are from such families. Nina who has spent almost 30 years in the UK (she is the only respondent within the sample who arrived in the UK prior to 1990), when asked about her own status within the school, clearly points out to class rather than to national or ethnic boundaries as other participants in my study who have been in the UK for a shorter time would:

> I am not even sure if the line goes across (ethnicities) …are you considered to be a middle class? Are you considered to have similar desires, values and interests as them or not … that is I think where the line goes across. I think there is a much bigger gap between the English middle class parent who has got certain values and an (English) parent from a very deprived background who has very different sorts of values than between a foreign parent and an English parent with similar values and a similar sort of background and education…I think education is a big

[52] Here I am talking about other mothers who may live in social housing or disadvantaged areas but who have children in schools with, as they claim, predominantly middle-class intake (Lidia, Mariola, Anna, Nora, Dorota, Halina, Karina, Natalia, Greta, Sonia). Four of them have children in one such school, four other mothers' children attend two such schools, and the two remaining mothers' children attend another two such schools.

> linking factor … it sort of goes across and bridges this gap of different nationalities (Nina, 4, contract data analyst, A, 1st int.).

Summary of Chapter Five

This chapter focused on the respondents' appraisal of the interfaces between their home culture and the culture of their neighbourhoods in the UK. The mothers endorse theorisation and delineation of the new surroundings by reference to their past in Poland used as a reference for the current state of affairs. Adaptation mechanisms are also brought to light in this part, carefully examining the emotional costs and identity re-enactments that are associated with transgression leading to the accommodation of new values and practices. Liminality scrutinised in this chapter is, as was pointed out, a fuzzy, 'half-way' condition facilitating the establishment of new identities.

Notwithstanding the relative lack of class-consciousness, or rather a certain form of it, that the respondents bring with them to the UK the emergent awareness of class is an easily recognised quality of their migratory journey. The analysis in this chapter has demonstrated that, despite the limited resources and opportunities arising from lack of economic capital, the participants in this study employed tactics facilitating traversing boundaries of economic and social powerlessness and poverty. To summarise, it has been determined that during the migrants' integration, the hybridisation of identities is a prominent feature and that the socio-economic identity becomes decisive in the formation of networks as opposed to ethnic identity. It also demonstrates that social and economic class becomes an important marker with regard to theorising the neighbourhoods in which the participants operate and to the schools, which they favour.

In the following chapter I move on to examining how various forms of capital impact on the mothers' processes of integration into the educational settings in the UK. It analyses how shaped in the past capital influences the mothers' negotiations of their new identity and strategies and how it helps formation of new capital (in a form of social transgressions and related opportunities). Within this chapter, an important for this thesis, concept of collective capital is examined.

Chapter Six

Impact of capital

Introduction

Chapter 6 deals with the deployment of overall maternal capital (economic, cultural, and social) and interlinks it with the strategies undertaken by the mothers with regard to their children education and upbringing. The assertions, which are brought about in this chapter in the form of mothers' testimonies remain an inherent component of the processes of social integration and of reshaping and formation of new identities. While bridging the possessed by the mothers capital with the strategies which they deliberately and inadvertently deploy in their children's rearing is the main theme of this chapter, it also deals with identifying and examining identity transformations among the participants. The mechanisms of integration are exposed via deployment of social and cultural capital and via the processes of shaping of new capital.

While in the previous chapter 5 I explored mothers' insights into their relationship between their homes and the culture of their neighbourhoods and argued the importance of socio-economic identity in the process of crossing of social boundaries, in this Chapter I focus on examining forms of capital affecting the process of integration into the educational and social structures of the UK. As introduced in Chapter 2, where I describe the theoretical underpinnings of this study, capital is divided in this thesis into individual and collective. Particularly for the sake of deployment of individual capital (capital relevant to home upbringing), it is essential to briefly introduce the sample's social class and levels of education. As it will become apparent later, as a matter of fact this feature is also important when I analyse collective capital (mainly attributed to schooling), which unites my respondents. In this Chapter I discuss that the form or amount of individual capital does not always condemn my participants to fail or succeed as it could be conjectured and that the collective capital has an important impact on my participants' dealings with educational and social field in the UK.

This chapter has four major parts. First (6.1) I analyse individual capital (private sphere) which I consider as based on individual circumstances (e.g. social and

educational background, individual assets) and which is primarily formed at home in the interactions with the closest family (cultural capital). Later (6.2) I look at collective capital, which is constructed via public, mainly school, socialisation. Separately (6.3) I explore religion and ethnicity, which are also understood as capital (individual or collective or at times both) having an impact on mother's conduct and trajectories. Finally (6.4) newly created, novel forms of capital, born in and through migratory processes are examined.

6. Impact of capital

Works tackling the topic of deployment of forms of capital among ethnic minorities or migrants or non-native groups predominantly are based on the notion of those groups lacking (all forms of capital) or having the wrong type of cultural capital (Aguilera, 2005; Bhatti, 1999; Blackledge, 2001; Brooker, 2002; Cardenas and Cardenas, 1977; Dwyer et al., 2006; Hayes, 1992; JRF paper 0195, 2005; Macleod, 1985; Perna and Titus, 2004). Such literature focuses and develops arguments on the assumptions that migrants are not insiders and hence frequently do not posses any of the indigenous or acquired capitals required to thrive, whether it be economic, cultural or social. Indeed, also in my study on many occasions the mothers expressed the feeling that the settled native populations had a certain advantage over them with regard to choosing schools, obtaining places in favoured ones or to teaching their children what they needed to know to excel educationally. As Nora (2, café owner, B), when talking to me about her hurdles in securing an admissible school for her daughter, put it: 'this is something that loses us, we do not know our rights; this was our situation.' Yet, mothers have proved to implement strategies, which would remedy their disadvantageous status and my aim is to demonstrate here those mechanisms applied by my participants. Also, capital which in the first sight might appear as inadequate may be in fact a sort of ‘blessing in disguise’, a great resource to produce unexpected and positive qualities as it will be explored in this chapter.

The mothers' level of education was divided into four groups.[53] (1) There were five mothers who had no A-levels completed. They were most likely attending

[53] This is based on the mothers' reporting about their education. Several were involved in doing various post-compulsory courses but these courses were not taken into account in this compilation.

vocational schools or simply dropped out from their secondary schools, which might have led to such qualifications. (2) There were twelve mothers who completed A-levels. In addition they may have studied in colleges, which would require completion of A-levels. (3) Five were graduates with a Bachelor's Degree. Three of the seven had not completed their studies. (4) Most mothers, 18, had postgraduate qualifications (Masters Degree, doctoral degrees or university postgraduate diplomas).[54] When quoting mothers I use an index system, as in the previous chapter. To each name, I add the following signifiers in brackets: (name, level of education group, professional status in the UK, time of arrival in the UK group, first/second interview in case of panel interviews). Group (marked as A) are mothers who came before 1990 (fall of communist regime in Poland), group (marked as B) are mothers who came between 1990 and 01. 04. 2004, group (marked as C) are mothers who came after 1.05. 2004. Example: (Mariola, 4, not in paid work, B, 2nd int.)

6.1 Individual capital (private sphere); home socialisation[55]

Home culture, individual mothers' aspirations, economic capital and maternal background are all strong agents affecting and explaining actions in relation to their children's schooling and expectations about their future. Private capital is the one bred and nurtured at home, in the interactions based on family ties; this can be cultural (what form of knowledge one is endowed with) or social (net-works into which one can tap into). It also entails economic capital, which may be converted and have a crucial role in formation of cultural assets.

Apart from the fact that all my interviews were turning around the theme of education, most mothers have been assuring me how important education of their children was in their life. I have heard many voices expressing that it is the most important point on their migrant life agenda and that they feel pressure to serve as a good example for their children. Even though generally migrants

[54] This number may feel slightly inflated when one realises than in Poland in the past Masters Degree (lasting five years) was a standard degree and there was no possibility to cease studies at Bachelor's level. I have included this category in group 4. Also, the educational boom of the 1990s resulted in an unprecedented increase in the number of university graduates and in effect, a pool of highly educated labour was created (Trevena, 2010).

[55] In order to extend the understanding of this part, refer to Case study 4 - Justyna; 'fragility of the migrant world' in Appendix XIII.

project their future in the host country through their children's better social and economic status rather than their own status, many of the participants in this study have been engaged in personal development or professional advancement and had plans to climb a social and professional ladder themselves. This feature may be linked to the relatively high level of education among my respondents.

> Good education has always been my priority so I will be trying to get her in the best schools. I was always crazy about my education so when I came here I decided to get some qualifications here so I did advanced and Cambridge proficiency (Bogna, 3, bookshop assistant/waitress, B, 1st int.).

22 of the 40 interviewed mothers have had the experience of higher education, both on graduate and postgraduate level. Several had doctoral degrees or commenced them and haven't completed or are still in the course of doing them. In some cases they left behind respected employment and came over to start all again. For instance Ada (4, media researcher, C) left behind her unfinished doctoral degree, academic position at a leading Polish university and her own restaurant and followed her partner who obtained a job in IT industry. Alina (4, clinical psychologist, B) left a responsible post in the department of psychology and decided to follow her dreams in the UK. Lidia (4, university lecturer, B), an academic In Poland decided to seek for a better future for her two daughters and start her academic career in the UK. The mothers who left behind careers and their chosen professional engagements, as a rule tend to follow qualifications in the UK and attempt to get back onto the track of their career. Today Ada works as a media researcher and has her own craft business. Alina, who came to the UK without any knowledge of English, did a professional doctoral degree and today works as a clinical psychologist. Lidia, overcoming many hurdles on her way, has senior academic position in London today. Vera (4, not in paid work, B, 2nd int.) decided to do another Master course in the UK and while looking after three young children did it in a fast track mode. Several mothers had more than one faculty completed, such as philosophy and anthropology or law and economics. Nonetheless, slightly less than half of the sample (18) has had not any experience of university and were involved in administrative or menial professions in Poland. They ranged from working in butchery to hairdressing to catering industry. I shall refer to these pre-migration educational and professional classifications as a mode of analysis of capital and strategies when I analyze the cases. This allows me to draw conclusions in

relation to educational and socio-economic status of participants as influencing their strategies with regard to their children's educational trajectories.

Bearing in mind that cultural capital is closely related to education and social class, I feel it is important to provide the reader with this information. Families and home are the major generator of children's early learning and 'the curriculum of their home is an amalgam of their parents' own school learning, passed on in some form to the child, and the learning which is acquired through daily life' (Brooker, 2002; 44). In fact for Bourdieu (1986) domestic transmission of cultural capital constitutes the best hidden and most determinant educational investment. Some of my respondents (7 explicitly spoke about it in one form or another) were aware of the heavy weight of this early years invisible and powerful nurturing. There was a major emphasis on developing academic and artistic skills and on extending children's general knowledge. Some mothers have mentioned that they wanted to do it their preferred Polish way and criticized the methods of learning/teaching in the UK. This doubt about the quality of education has indeed partly pushed them to work more with their children, who at one point may be contrasted with other children in Poland if the family decides to return.

> Every day we would do something which wouldn't necessarily be linked to school but would develop his intellectual skills, help him focus at school, for instance puzzles or play games, also Lego blocks for him to read instructions or math games on the computer (Nina, 4, contract data analyst, A, 1st int.).

> I always give him spelling or some mathematical tasks. (..) I also told him to learn time tables over a few days, you know entirely in the Polish way in contrast to the English school, where they are taught over 2 years. After a few days of arguing with him, he did it, he just memorized it and he was extremely happy with himself (Alina, 4, clinical psychologist, B, 2nd int.).

In the following quote, apart from the efforts of conscious transfer of knowledge (cultural capital), it is clear that motherly emotional capital plays an important part in formation of children's aspirations and character. Although emotional capital is not fully explored within this study, it is worth signalling that cultural capital and emotional capital intertwine and create a powerful mechanism to secure children's positive actualisation. Reay in her work on mothers' involvement in their children's education observes that class seems to have significant effects and appears to be linked to aspects of cultural capital such as confidence, information about educational provisions, assertiveness and a sense of entitlement (Reay, 1998). This sense of entitlement and pressures

('achieve at least level 5', 'wouldn't be too challenged') is coupled with maternal hard work. Vera is dedicated and takes her children swimming every day and regularly oversees their homework:

> Most of my time I am just involved in my children's education. I make sure they are doing what they are supposed to do, I help them with their homework. I just hope that she will achieve at least level 5 in her SATs. With my younger one it is easier and though she is in year 3, in fact she is in year 4 because they decided she wouldn't be too challenged in Y3 so they do material for Y4. There is another Polish girl who goes with her (..) Giza is extremely bright, she is just able, amazing level of concentration. In swimming the same; though she is quite slow she has excellent technique (Vera, 4, not in paid work, B, 1st int.).

Interestingly, those forms of positioning capital are not limited to middle class mothers (pre-migration status meaning, educated above BA – 22 participants) in my Polish sample. Although the degree of assertiveness and of access to information may be hampered by lack of English amongst the less educated Poles, in this study there was a general feeling among participants that these were almost exclusively economic resources which could prevent children from a full engagement in the generation of other capital rather than class status, understood as educational, cultural and social asset. It would tentatively indicate that in my study, class (understood as the level of education) was not hugely indicative of educational engagements of Polish families. This is not to say it did not play role in strategies undertaken by the mothers with regards to their children educational futures, mainly due to lower economic resources and more barriers such as language. Yet, the aspirational aspect of knowledge transfer and of building up of cultural capital was the same for low and highly educated mothers. This, I systematically evidence via my participants' testimonies throughout this chapter and, as it will be clarified in Chapter 7, I partly attribute to the legacy of communist upbringing.

No mother has denied that they would like their children to be brought up embracing both cultures. First, it provides opportunities in both linguistic and cultural worlds (Polish and English) for their children in the future and second, while still comfortably functioning in the UK, their children have the chance to maintain Polish identity and ties to the country of origin to which the parents, as a rule, are still strongly linked. There was no a single mother who cut off links with her Polishness or who did not want her children to learn Polish and maintains links with Poland. Being bilingual serves as a potent form of cultural

capital, which can generate considerable advantages in the future. Renata (2, not in paid work, C, 2nd int.) for example reads to her son in Polish but encourages him also to read in English and buys for him books in both languages. According to my analysis, the educational level of mothers did not play any role in whether there was a desire for their children to become confident users of both linguistic spheres. The paramount feature was the overarching wish of the better educated participants for their children to also speak languages other than English and Polish. 19 mothers with university degrees expressed their view on this topic. This mainly involved learning Spanish or French. Yet, 4 of the 18 mothers who have not had the university education spoke about learning an additional language.

This intentional and informed transfer of cultural capital at home (as opposed to the less conscious and overt formation of habitus) has not always been carried out without the predicaments of migrant realities. Transfer of cultural capital at early age at home is paved with hurdles such as lack of economic resources. Those hurdles may be temporary, fluctuating, transitory and volatile. It would be wrong to claim they are fixedly and unflinchingly attached to class origin and that precariousness of existence is characteristic of individuals who are most ostensibly disadvantaged. In Nina's (4, contract data analyst, A) case, the loss of flow of economic capital was always influencing the amount of cultural capital the parents could instill in Tomek. Both parents' jobs were temporary and insecure and the mother has expressed that 'educating Tomek is a juggle and sometimes he can go on skiing trips but sometimes not'. She also mentioned that 'he used to have a private tutor for literacy but when we both lost our jobs we stopped that and tried it ourselves but it was much harder.' Alina (4, clinical psychologist, B, 2nd int.) admitted that when she 'was doing her doctorate, she was so worried, preoccupied and exhausted' that she 'couldn’t do anything, she didn’t have time or energy [to teach Marek]'. It has been unceasingly emphasized that economic capital is easiest to convert into other forms of capital (e.g. through extra tuition, access to prestigious spaces, resources aiding generation of educational and social capital such as books, computers, phones or branded clothing). In a parallel fashion lack of it can hinder children’s access to potentially gainful activities, spaces or knowledge. Hence, constraints such as lack of time, funds, parental fatigue all belong to the private sphere capital, usually being individual, idiosyncratic and depending on personal circumstances.

Limited social networks (social capital) or exclusively relaying on co-ethnic social ties does not always foster learning of the host country's language and culture and can make it more difficult to transfer knowledge and values promoted at schools. This can particularly be the case when parents' English is limited. A significant number of participants in my study have lived in accommodation with other Poles or, having a Polish partner have depended on networks of their co-ethnics. For instance Justyna (1, not in paid work, C) and her family live in one room in a large house inhabited by other Polish migrants and she complained 'this doesn't allow her to learn any English'. Her children are exposed to Polish friends, Polish TV channels and in their primary school half of the staff speak Polish. A few mothers have revealed in general having limited social networks and while parents work long hours, also weekends, children are forced to stay on their own without friends who frequently live at a considerable distance. Urszula (2, waitress in pub, B, 1st int.) describes how hard it is for the family to spend quality time together:

> We work in the weekends, I work Sunday, my husband on Saturday. We rarely have a day together (Urszula, 2, waitress in pub, B, 1st int.).

As much as lack of economic capital may impact on children's well-being and future educational and professional trajectories, such its ample amount may aid parents to make the migratory experience less traumatic for their children and guide their educational and social choices in a favourable way. When Dorota (4, medical doctor, C) and Halina (4, medical doctor, C) arrived in the UK to work as general practitioners, a worker from Primary Care Trust was assigned to look after them and help finding accommodation and to recommend an adequate school for their children. Below, Dorota gives an account of her experience:

> We were in a school where most children were Bangoli and we were told that the school is doing so well, that they had such a jump because of some kind of very novel approach and the head was so proud of it while showing us around and at this moment, this man from PCT, he was mumbling very quietly 'but none of those children will go to this school anyway, it is obvious' (Dorota, 4, medical doctor, C).

This testimony demonstrates that among those 'who have', the conversion of economic capital into other forms of capital is less laborious; in this case the relocation agents were helping the mothers to find suitable schools and, on the top, guiding them not to choose certain schools, which in the future may not

secure the chances of moving to appropriate (selective) educational and professional niches. However, also economically less privileged mothers deployed resources in finding adequate schools for their children, usually employing a Polish person to do the search for them for a fee. Both Zofia (2, not in paid work, C) and Weronika (1, hairdresser working from home, C) used English-speaking Poles (husband's accountant and a Pole from an advertisement in a Polish newspaper) to provide this service for them.

Even though many parents are not adequately prepared for migration (Sales et al., 2008) and at times expose their children to daunting ordeals, those who are in a comfortable financial position often make efforts to prepare their children for migration, mainly by securing private English lessons prior to their move:

> Of course as soon as we knew we would come to England I sent children to learn English, they were learning for a year (Zofia, 2, not in paid work, C).

> Klaudia had a private teacher at home for two years. One year she had English at school but it was at school in a group of 25 children and then she had a teacher at home twice a week (Wanda, 1, not in paid work, C).

Economic capital also mitigated unfavourable fate in the case of Kalina, Nora's (2, café owner, B) daughter. Nora and her partner own a small, well prospering business in West London, which secures a significant financial profit. They also inherited a large property in one of the major UK towns when Nora's aunt passed away. When Kalina didn't get a place in a preferred local girls religious comprehensive school, her parents without hesitation agreed to pay tuition fees for Kalina in one of the well-regarded independent schools in London. The depicted by the mother reinforcement of cultural capital at home combined with sufficient, rather rare among Polish migrants, economic capital allowed Kalina to avoid attending, despised by the parents, local comprehensive:

> I think Kalina, as for a child that doesn't come from a native English family, is doing great. Everything seems so easy for her, writing, reading, maths, she is always with the most able children. Of course we always were doing things with her, I always took care so that she had toys with which she can learn something (2, café owner, B).

Yet, the lack of economic capital and its consequences may also impact on mothers' endeavours in an adverse way. For example in her first interview Anna (1, casual jobs, B) told me that she could not afford paying for her daughters' after school care being on benefits but she also pointed out that if she started

working, she would lose all her benefits and would not cope financially. Hence the girls were deprived of opportunities of attending extracurricular activities as the fees were beyond her means:

> Very expensive…£30 per week and if siblings attend it is £50 so I cannot pay. If I work full time they will cut all my benefits and I will not manage…clearly it would be ideal to go to work and meet people… I went to job centre and a woman there told me I should stay at home. (..) Of course I would like to send them to a dance school but it is all expensive that is why I would like to work to be able to give them this. We went to Hackney Empire[56] twice (Anna, 1, casual jobs, B, 1st int.).

Anna also wanted her daughters to attend Polish Saturday school but again her financial hardship prevented her from paying the fees: 'one cannot pay in instalments there and I cannot afford to pay all at once.' The lack of sufficient economic resources precludes the mother to allow her children to exercise most basic children's rights to leisure and affects their prospects to follow their potential interests and dreams.

Lack of economic capital also seems to stand in the way to thriving in the case of Urszula (2, waitress in pub, B) and her family. When I met her for the first time the family lived in a squalid tiny 1 bed flat above commercial premises in a high street of North London. Revealing that the family is happy in the current accommodation, Urszula, by contrasting her situation with others, had a well-defined notion of her inferior material and social belonging:

> Here bills are included, nobody raises prices so I am happy here. I am searching for a 2 bed now but they are far more expensive. (..) In fact, in Hampstead Heath you can see different houses, different cars, you can see that it is a different class, different people. It does not matter for me where I live as long as it is not in the main road (Urszula, 2, waitress in pub, B, 1st int.).

This, as one would commonly imagine, limiting situation doesn't prevent Urszula to make sure Alek is achieving at school. The parents, despite their economic hardship secured private English classes for their son so that he could quickly access the school curriculum. He became a laureate in a poetry contest organised in his primary school. For the mother there were always ways to turn predicaments into various forms of capital. Here she gives an account of how living in a shared accommodation as a family with other tenants (a relatively common practice among newly arrived Polish migrants) contributed to extending Alek's English, to building social and cultural capitals:

[56]Hackney Empire is a theatre in north-east London.

> In the beginning we were in a shared accommodation with boys from South Africa and they were helping us a lot with Alek's English because of course I didn't know some expressions (Urszula, 2, waitress in pub, B, 1st int.).

As the family is employed in professions paying a minimum wage the parents have to work long hours and the husband, who 'works from 7am to 6 in the evening, is so tired that he does not find time to develop his basic English' (Urszula, 2, waitress in pub, B, 1st int.), reducing in this way chances for a better remunerated employment. Lack of time always seems to be a form of barrier among families who work in low paid professions and who are not aware of their rights to benefits. Urszula has expressed that half-term activities publicised in Alek's school were 'too expensive costing £12 - 15 per day' and that 'she didn't want Alek to stay at home playing computer games or watching TV'. The mother had no knowledge of her entitlements to help with childcare.

Conversely, those families who are aware of the provisions within the English welfare system and who are entitled to them[57], even though articulate uneasiness over the system's generosity, use the privileges extensively. Many of the mothers with young children chose not to work professionally and instead look after their children, something which was not feasible in Poland due to lack of corresponding benefits. Several mothers spoke to me about plans for having more children claiming supporting a family was an attainable accomplishment in the UK. Professional work was an important element of their well-being and an indication of normality, as opposed to the devious act of abusing the generous English welfare system, but several mothers felt happy being able to learn English and spend time with their young children.

> We do not have any necessity for me to go to work. My husband earns enough, we have housing benefit and my husband says *why should you work at the expense of Pola [daughter]?* We are planning another one (Irena, 2, not in paid work, C).

> In Poland I worked in a bank, now I am doing accountancy in the college, I worked in the bank in mortgages, I still want to continue it… even though I am happy I can spend time with Zuza, I will look for work after summer holidays (Kamila, 4, not in paid work, B).

[57] At the time Polish migrants could not receive benefits for the first 12 months of their stay in the UK.

Another of the participants, Vera (4, not in paid work, B, 1st int.) has very high educational aspirations with regard to her children but rather limited, as she has been emphasising throughout both interviews, economic resources to fulfil her ambitions. Vera herself wasn't in employment during our first interview and during the follow -up interview she was in the process of looking for work having completed her fast track Masters degree in planning. Her partner has a small business but the generated income is not high. Vera cannot afford private tuition for her daughters, even with the sacrifices but somewhat finds ways to remedy the lack of resources.

> I can't afford paying for private teachers but we always do homework and I always buy for them books with tests to do (…) the [instrumental] classes are very expensive. They also go swimming, once a week I take them and once a week they go with their school, they also go for drama classes (Vera, 4, not in paid work, B, 1st int.).

Here she explains how resourceful she is and how she benefits from the plentiful opportunities available in the UK, which, as many mothers claimed, was not possible in Poland. Vera's husband, a native French speaker organises home learning for the girls in order to maintain their French.

> Always on the weekend we go to the swimming pool; it belongs to the council and the council pays for it so we could always use this opportunity. On Saturday morning they have an hour of French with their dad. He brings a board and they do it. They don't go to the Polish school because there is nothing nearby but they both are able to speak Polish (Vera, 4, not in paid work, B, 1st int.).

The lack of economic capital may trigger a darker side of resourcefulness and coerce the stakeholders into illicit activities. During my interview with Maria (1, not in paid work, C), she was constantly checking an airport website and communicating with her husband who suddenly left home. Earlier, Maria described their status and explained that they were waiting to be granted incapacity benefit for her partner who had back problems. They were also expecting to be granted social housing. After several such interruptions during our interview, Maria finally, with a certain degree of consternation, admitted that 'the husband works picking passengers up at airports' and that 'this is their way to moonlight in order to get by'.

Exposure of this questionable activity also reveals in a way the precariousness and insecurity of migrant life, particularly in the early stages of immigration, when they are likely to relocate frequently, have to learn English and still have

strong ties with Poland, which makes it harder to integrate in the UK. Several participants, in particular those who arrived relatively recently pointed out this lack of stability and continuity as having impact on their children.

> Until we find our own corner we have to knock around in this world. For the last three years we were in between England and Poland and it must have had a strong influence on Michal and Agata (Justyna, 1, not in paid work, C).

> Adam is shy, not towards adults but towards children. I think it is because he was in Poland, then in Norway and of course there children spoke Norwegian, here they speak another language he does not understand, so there is no continuity for him (Ada, 4, media researcher, C, 1st int.).

6.2 Collective capital (public sphere); socialisation and ideologies

> *Do you think that school is providing sufficient amount of after school activities?*
>
> You know, here it is not like in Poland, all the interest-clubs… gymnastics, sport activities, after school art club, history club, computer club… here it is not like that at all.
>
> *Should they be provided?*
>
> Yes, yes.. Children would not get engaged in foolish things because they would be longer at school. Besides, she would love to attend them.
>
> (from an interview with Wanda,1, not in paid work, C)

The aspect of my research which I am exploring in this part focuses on the issue of how the capital, being a product of the collective domain impacts on mothers actions with regard to their children's education. It is postulated here that the legacy of communist upbringing of the interviewed mothers is reflected in their conduct and outlook in the encounter with the educational system in the UK. This legacy echoes in their perspective on educational qualities, which, de facto, are frequently perceived, as it will be exposed below, as inequalities or discriminatory practices. However, the mothers' conduct and strategies based on collective conscience and described in this part, in my view, are a form of a collective cultural capital rather than social capital. First of all I outline Polish migrant mothers' insights in the encounters with distinct features of schooling in Poland and in the UK. Later I analyse more subtle, often tacitly expressed aspects of English education, of which ethos at times stands in an abrupt juxtaposition to

what my participants are accustomed, being socialised under the communist or transitional regimes.

I have already mentioned in the introductory chapter that my aim is not to spell out all quandaries of British educational system about which my participants felt puzzled or angered. The issues, as seen by the mothers, presented in this section are the ones which were coming out most prominently in my interviews and which are relevant to the specificity of a 'Polish lens', of collective educational conscience of my respondents. Here I touch on an early onset of schooling, (theme that came out in 30 interviews) academic standards (33 interviews), attitudes to parenting (19 interviews) and notions of discipline (28 interviews).

6.2.1 Parental insights on differences between schooling in Poland and the UK

6.2.1.1 Perspectives on parenting

Although the interviewed mothers have recognized the premature engagement in structured learning, this emphasis on learning environment corresponds with their conceptualizations of childhood as free of responsibilities, such as looking after siblings, domestic duties, work etc. This vision of carefree formative years somewhat explains, within its own cultural form, why there is such a stress put on the sphere of intellectual enrichment and consequently homework as opposed to domestic, adult tasks.

In spite of this notion, in certain realms, children in Poland are given more autonomy and there seems to be a collective trust that children are capable of looking after themselves and of forming independently without permanent parental supervision. On several occasions my participants displayed astonishment that children in the UK are not allowed to stay on their own at home or that they have to be escorted to school rather than walk independently. Sylvia (4, not in paid work, B) pointed out that she finds it hard that 'here you have to take the kids to school and bring them back'. She suggests 'it would be so good to send them on their own but here it is impossible'. Justyna (1, not in paid work, C) in her narrative emphasizes the lack of trust in children's abilities to cope with everyday intricacies of life. She explains how disappointed she was discovering that her 10 year old daughter is not allowed to enter a swimming

pool without an adult's supervision.

> In Poland children from the age of 7 could enter alone and were safe guarded by a lifeguard. But here they wouldn't let her in as there was no carer. And she is 10 years old! It is very strange for me that children here are treated as some sort of disable, as if they were not able to do things by themselves (Justyna, 1, not in paid work, C).

Ida (4, not in paid work, C) even revealed she, assuming her 9 year old son is responsible enough to look after himself, leaves him at home without an adult supervision:

> We do an illegal thing and leave Antek at home by himself for 2-3 hours. He has telephone, we phone him, he can watch animal planet for three hours or be with his computer. He is aware that one cannot use a hair-dryer in combination with water (Ida, 4, not in paid work, C).

The notion of a transforming nature of childhood in general terms and ubiquitously has been revoked by five mothers with regard to various aspects of their children's education. It is even more unrelenting for them as apart from generational and urban-triggered social changes ubiquitously happening within the concept of childhood, they can observe relatively prominent cultural contrasts between Poland and their new country. Seven mothers brought up the subject of Polish upbringing in the spirit of togetherness where children are allowed to play without adults, only in the company of other children. Here a mother is alluding to the negotiation skills which children self-learn in such interplay and other advantages which this sort of interactions bring:

> In Poland she would go in small groups, with her friends, by herself. It seemed children in Poland are more together, they are more communicative and spontaneous. Maybe they are not given the chance to develop it here? Here it is 'bye-bye' and everyone goes to their own home (Justyna, 1, not in paid work, C).

She also reflects upon a changing fashion of her son's growing up, who in Poland was 'always with friends playing outside' and here Justyna is 'afraid to let him go by himself' so the son is always with the parents and 'it is a bit boring for him'. The lack of social community, which the family had in Poland, clearly causes a distress for the mother who adds that if they had a car, at least they 'could drop them at other friends' houses who live far away'.

Another, frequently highlighted, though often implicitly is the fact of lack of collective responsibilities for all children in the community. In Poland there is an

unspoken social consent in relation to a concerted disciplining of children. It has been noted in my study that this is not always the case in the UK and that other parents or even educators feel inhibited to reprimand or foster other people's children. Danuta (2, works from home in small business, C) for example was very surprised that the teacher was uncomfortable about her lenient reaction when the teacher explained that she accidentally hurt her autistic son. Danuta urged her not to worry and explained that she faced such situations every day at home. The mother asked me with bewilderment in her voice: 'Is it so bad here that parents make rows to teachers for such things? Maybe it is to do with the fact that here there is no such thing as shared obligation towards children as it is in Poland. In the UK everyone seems to be responsible only for their own.'

6.2.1.2 Class perception and class self-ascription

As aforementioned, there is much discomfort or blankness when my respondents are asked about their social standing in the UK. Since in Poland class has been, at times less, at times more skilfully masked, they may have little schemata of it in their mind-sets. However, for their benefit this limited class-consciousness may in fact inhibit their understanding how class structure can condemn underprivileged individuals' social, economic and professional trajectories. It may provide them with the advantage of lacking self-inhibition due to the lack of class prejudice. Hence, lack of class ascription can work as an enabler rather than a constraint. This form of the legacy of communism may have a critical impact on how they perceive educational paths in the UK or how they channel their children's trajectories immediately after coming to the UK. In the course of time, the participants seemed to gain more awareness of British class subtleties and they started developing more neoliberal, prejudiced and selective behaviours; from *disconnected* citizens they were turning to *connected* ones. The section below demonstrates the somewhat naïve and innocent initial perceptions of British educational policies by Polish migrant mothers, which ultimately, directly or non-directly those mothers interpret as subversive and damaging.

6.2.1.3 Policies interpreted as leading to unequal chances in life[58]

I have identified a set of practices or policies performed in British schools, which the mothers explicitly or implicitly interpreted as leading to potential social inequalities. In this part I focus on examining those practices as seen by Polish mothers. Those perceptions are attributed to the collective capital (acquired in public sphere, usually via institutions), which they carry with them to the UK. Based on the analysis and interpretation of the participants' testimonies, the following policies, as leading to societal inequalities and educational malfeasance, could be outlined:

- *setting/streaming*
- *uneven quality of state education*
- *competition between schools*
- *unpredictability and uncontrollability of educational planning experienced by parents*
- *schools' reliance upon parental support*
- *low academic standards provided by state education*

A more thorough analysis of those testimonies and a rationale for the above assertions are detailed below with the main outlined features highlighted in the text in bold.

None of the Polish mothers have explicitly came up with the notion that their or other underprivileged parents' children may have poorer chances of succeeding on educational and professional arena due to state educational policies and educational markets. Yet, the fact that matters often trigger frustrations originates from the awareness, or instant revelation (during our interview for instance) that their children may be in some way disadvantaged.

Several mothers were surprised with the way in which children in British schools were grouped by ability (in the UK called *setting or streaming*) at an early age. This is the practice, common in some schools and school systems, of creating groups based on student ability with the assumption that having kids of similar

[58] In order to extend the understanding of this part, refer to Case study 5; 'educational legacies of communism' – Lidia (4, university lecturer, B) in Appendix XIII

abilities learning together makes a better learning environment. I shall point out that the subject of streaming and targeted expectations is a contentious one and the respondents have had various ideas about this strategy. According to Trevena (2012), the practice of streaming was welcomed by some Polish parents who think that the system in England allows them to follow their natural abilities rather than forcing them to work on task they find unmanageable. Yet, it is strongly disapproved of by others who contest the practice as leading to inequalities. In general, streaming is frequently perceived by Polish parents as positive when their children are academically successful but when the concept is discussed in more depth, they swiftly conclude its detrimental effect, particularly to children without a certain favourably seen by schools form of cultural capital. 13 mothers in this study mentioned that they were surprised children had to sit at particular tables according to whether they were seen as being in the 'top' or 'bottom' group. Three were unhappy that rather than being given extra work to catch up, children placed in the lower ability groups were given less challenging homework. Also they were concerned that children may be labelled as 'little able or unintelligent' and that this label would stick to them and affect their future chances and aspirations:

> They [children] sit according to abilities. The main thing for children is that they want to stay at the table where they are sat, they all play with children from that table. My children come home and say that they don't want to play with children sitting at different tables. They will play only with the children from the top table. It is so unfair on other children. They assign for them the label of a weak one or a strong one. You know I don't need to learn because I am the stupid one. In Poland we didn't care about it as far as I remember. We sit together, we play together and it doesn't matter how clever we are, the only important thing is that we are friends (Aniela, 4, voluntary work, B).

> (..)Child who is in the weaker group has less homework, they get the same worksheet and children who are in the weaker group have to do one example, and those who are in the better group, they have to give an illustration for each example. So what? When a child gives an illustration for each example then it will do even more work, so it will learn even more and if it does only one example it will stay behind. So there is no motivation that the children who are worse would improve… if you are weak then 'sit on it' [stay there] (Sylvia, 4, not in paid work, B).*[59]

[59] Some of my interviewees were also interviewed for another study commissioned by Multiverse, which I carried out at Middlesex University together with L. Ryan, R. Sales and A. D'Angelo. If I occasionally use quotes from those interviews they are marked with an asterisk. Yet, those participants were interviewed separately where I used a different interview schedule.

There was considerable disappointment about *uneven quality* offered by state schools, which theoretically should teach the same curriculum and have the same academic results. I have already provided a case study of a mother (Sonia, 4, catering manager, B) whose daughter changed primary schools and the mother discovered that the daughter had major gaps in knowledge due to striking differences in academic expectations:

> Why all the kids in this school can read and in the other not reading a word in Y1 wasn't a problem?! (Sonia, 4, catering manager, B)

This is how Renata describes stark differences in academic level between two different schools, which her son attended. The first school was a community school with a large body of pupils in early stages or learning English while the second was a Catholic school with very few children from refugee or migrant families who came recently. Throughout the interview her son's academic identity is always exposed through talking about what ability group he is:

> It is a different school, here children have homework every day, in the other school it was once, maybe twice a week. Here they put a lot of emphasis on writing so Romek become much better at writing. In the previous school he was in top group in maths and second top in literacy in this school he is in the worst group in literacy and still best in maths (Renata, 2, not in paid work, C, 2nd int.).

After the arrival in the UK often parents are not aware of the admission criteria to primary and secondary schools and there is a universally established myth that they have to put down the child's name early on the list in order to gain a place. This idea somewhat emits an urge for competing for 'good' schools with other parents who might be in a better position than frequently relocating migrants.

> When I came here I did not know that in UK, if you want your child to attend a good school, you need to put your child's name down two years earlier, at least to good schools (Ida, 4, not in paid work, C).

Almost every mother, with a few exceptions among those who have been in the UK for a longer time, claimed that Catholic schools have a much more respectable reputation and wanted their children to attend such schools. It is also a common knowledge that obtaining a place in a Catholic school requires certain efforts and that those schools, as a rule, are oversubscribed:

> I had no clue about the system here and my friend said to me that I already have to apply and I was shocked because she was only 5, I

> always heard that Catholic schools are the best (Kamila, 4, not in paid work, B).
>
> It is very difficult to get to a Catholic school. I have heard that children in Catholic school have better education, they are taught better. But here there are so few places for Catholic schools that I even won't try as we do not have church wedding (Weronika, 1, hairdresser working from home, C).
>
> There is the fame that religious schools are usually better in the UK (Maria, 1, not in paid work, C).

Here the mother whose daughter attends a community school questions this assumption:

> She had to go to school immediately after she came and of course in the beginning we wanted to send her to a Catholic school thinking that it would be better. Here they all say that the name of the school here makes a difference and that Catholic schools are better. But I am not so sure it is true (Irena, 2, not in paid work, C).

There was an overwhelming feeling among the mothers that in the UK parents have very little choice when it comes to choosing schools for their children. They expressed that this is a gradual process of learning that *competition between schools* is in fact an intentional strategy to instigate quality. Through competing for a wider range of pupils, schools can be more selective (despite their stringent selection criteria) and choose families, who, they think, will ascertain those schools' high academic quality. As the mother below expresses, schools with lower scores must find ways to attract a wider pool of socio-economic backgrounds, by, for example being welcoming:

> This school did not make a good impression on me – I said *'what? I got such an unpleasant welcome'* and I was outraged but only later I understood that the worse school it is, the more likely it will be 'yes, of course, take it (place in the school)'(Sylvia, 4, not in paid work, B).*

Bogna (3, bookshop assistant/waitress, B), like many others, expressed dismay that even primary schools can compete for students:

> It is not you who chooses the school, it is the school that chooses you (Bogna, 3, bookshop assistant/waitress, B, 2nd int.).

The latter generates the feeling about *unpredictability and uncontrollability of educational planning*. Carers are genuinely concerned about it and maintain that the fate of their children's educational accomplishments seems allegedly to be far more precarious in the UK than back home, as in the UK no merit determines

trajectory. In their country of origin educational paths were more significantly verified by achievement and here, among the great diversity of schools and not being aware of the nuances of the complex admission procedures, migrants may be disoriented:

.

> I am happy with the area but with this school [local secondary] I don't know how it is – are those the best pupils [who are accepted]? Because for certain, there must be, like in Poland, a contest of 'final certificates' or examinations. Here, they do not get grades but the teacher for sure sums up their performance… I don't know how it is happening here (Wanda, 1, not in paid work, C).

> We are very confused. I really would like her to go to a good school and I am very worried that the choice is very limited and it seems that there are few schools comparing with the number of children who need places and in fact all parents who I speak to who have children in Y5 and Y6 talk about it as a nightmare (Edyta, 3, project assistant, C).

Parental support in the UK would normally be associated with some sort of control over educational planning and educational futurity of children. It is taken for granted that the more effort carers put into designing trajectories for their children, the greater the chances of success to follow them. Yet in Poland, this parental support is seen only in the categories of supervising children's academic learning and according to the Polish mothers these are the exams or final results, which should dictate future educational paths and not the parental educational spoon-feeding:

> In Poland you just knew how the child did [academically] so you more or less knew if she had a chance to go to the lycee or not. Here it is all so confusing and it does not seem to depend on the [child's] results (Ola, 2, not in paid work, B).

> I don't like that here they don't have grades. You don't have a clue where your child will end up in a secondary school. If not grades then what? (Anna, 1, casual jobs, B, 1st int.)

Parental engagement can have various facets; it can for instance be understood as parental involvement in school life or as an active engagement in children's learning, particularly academic. It seems that the latter option is more emphasized and performed by the majority of Polish mothers. They rarely have concrete ideas of organizational and social issues at schools, but they do have a fairly sound knowledge of their children's learning process and the curriculum. Those mothers who are engaged in time-consuming professional activities, which leave little time for involvement in schools, at times complained that

school in the UK also serves as a social arena and there is almost an expectation that parents socialise, participate and support school, something different to what they experienced back home.

> Almost all English, very few foreigners, middle class or maybe slightly lower, mums do not work, only dads, mums – it is all social life, we were so surprised that we had to socialise and talk to them, in Poland different – everybody by themselves, it was a shock because Arek was invited to someone's house but we did not know the parents but here it was so normal, in Poland children are friendly with each other, parents are not involved – they don't invite each other or if so they are older (Mariola, 4, not in paid work, B, 1st int.).

Importantly, I would like to highlight another related feature, that is *reliance upon parental support* when it comes to academic input and output. By relying on input from carers, it is not school which provides for all equally that has a major role in forming responsible and educated citizens but rather varying in quality and quantity parental efforts. Several Polish mothers in this study noted it and considered it as discriminatory. Not telling the parents openly by teachers about their child falling behind was also seen as a 'politically correct' practice but not providing opportunities for children, who could catch up by doing extra work or going to booster classes.

The lack of clear instructions from school for working with children at home, as spoken about by 17 mothers in my sample, makes the families feel out of control by not creating a dialogue with them. Also, the varying degree of parental involvement with children's homework from one home to another, as Bogna points out, can anticipate the child's achievement and create inequalities. This, apart from being seen as a feature of mediocre educational standards, was also seen as an unfair and discriminatory practice; schools in their eyes were not providing equal opportunities for all, as it would be if they were giving uniform homework:

> They expect children to know things that they don't teach them at school, they expect the parents to study things with them and then just have it ready at school, which is not fair because there are things I have taught to Ania within the last few months that she should have learnt at school. I am sure that the kids who are in this red group (top achievers) are not the kids that learn things at school, I am sure that they are getting a lot of help from their parents; that is why they are doing well (Bogna, 3, bookshop assistant/waitress, B, 1st int.).

In Poland, all children are meant to do daily homework and even though in some cases there is parental input, normally teacher can monitor children's learning

and this procures progress. Many of my participants were coming up with the idea that having low expectations dictated by core curriculum is a fallacious attitude, which covertly gives some parents a leeway to educationally spoon-feed their children, while others, for various reasons don't engage in this practice. In the cited excerpt, Bogna (3, bookshop assistant/waitress, B) pinpoints the unfairness of schools not giving all children equal educational chances but relying on parental cultural and economic capitals.

Yet, even though this veiled act is not encouraged and on some occasions even discouraged, it is a living feature of British schooling as many middle-class parents would do it without openly admitting it. The notion that was coming through in the study was that migrants felt that they are lacking the insider's knowledge about the intricacies of the educational system in the UK and thus should have the same chances of providing opportunities for their children and not be excluded from this perspicacious practice:

> There could be someone who would tell me [about complementary after-school classes] two, three years ago … they take pride in claiming that the school is good enough to teach children … you know this is the way I understand it… this kind of pride… You know, education is free so they think 'why should they send me to 'Brains'[60] for which I have to pay' (Eliza, 2, not in paid work, C).

The participants felt that clear and transparent information about their children's progress and class schedule, specifying what they are doing at school could help them serving as a tool to instil equal educational chances. In this way they would be able to monitor potential gaps in knowledge and rectify weaknesses.

> I do not like that teachers are not frank. Half way through a school year they are not informing me about what I could do so that my child could do better. When I tell them that my child attends 'Brains', they do not know what it is! (Eliza, 2, not in paid work, C)*

> My husband goes to parents meetings...never any problems at all. He was very inquisitive and was asking whether there were any problems at all because the teacher was talking only about positives but the teacher said that not at all and only that she is very agreeable and always moderates conflicts between children (Olga, 1, not in paid work, C).

The next issue specified by participants is an extension to the issue to the schools' reliance on parental support. There was an almost unanimous

[60] I gave a fictitious name for a company, which specialises in tutoring pupils. It is a fee-paying private initiative and children are supposed to do daily academic tasks based on instruction.

assumption that learning should be based at school, supported by assigned homework and that progress should be mandatory. Formal teaching should not come from the parents and be based on the amount or quality of their cultural capital but should be set and realized formally at schools. Based on their experience from Poland, there was a popular *expectation of state education to unconditionally provide with high standard of education* for all citizens and belief that school is not a 'playground to socialise':

> I can see that the children in weaker groups have less work and for me they should do more so they could catch up with those children who are in the higher group but here it is like that if you are down there, you are down there…(Sylvia, 4, not in paid work, B).*

> I don't understand why they don't do some sort of additional classes for children who are not on the required level. You know the kind of booster classes as we had in Poland (Aniela, 4, voluntary work, B).

> We got a place for Romek in a Catholic school when he was in Year 2. We decided that you do not go to school for social reasons so even if he left many friends behind he still keeps in touch with them, meets them locally, is invited to birthday parties (Renata, 2, not in paid work, C, 2nd int.).

In addition, after-school activities and free after-school childcare are expected to be provided as of right and to be subsidised or inexpensive.[61]

> Here there are after school activities but places are limited and we got a letter that it is only for children from Y1 or Y2 or 5. It is not like in Poland that everyone can go whenever they wish and there are spaces for everyone. That is why I do not look for any work as I wouldn't manage to collect her. It is also very expensive, £4 per hour and if she wants to go every day it will add up (Roza, 2, not in paid work, C).

> In Poland she was doing a lot of things, she was doing some art classes, swimming 3 days a week. Here she is not doing anything, whatever we try it is always full, we tried scouts, no spaces, then we went to the swimming pool (Justyna, 1, not in paid work, C).

6.2.2 Construction of identity as collective capital; facing multicultural London

The strenuous act of coping with 'the other' among the Polish community doubtlessly is a consequence of a shared experience of a lack of cohabiting with difference, it is a legacy of post-war period when Poland was relatively non-multicultural. Although it will be analysed in more details in the next section it is

[61] In Appendix XIII I present an illustration of one of the mother's (Lidia's) conceptualisation that state schools need to take more responsibility for the children's overall learning. Not only costly, the opportunities simply are not offered within the state sector, as it would be in Poland according to her.

important to define this feature as a legacy of post-war years of ethnic unity in Poland, rather than as an idiosyncratic innate feature of a Pole. It has been apparent in this research that the construction of identity is almost always happening in the condemnatory atmosphere towards 'the other', 'the irregular', 'the unlike'. The collectivist and unificating nature of the communist ideology has contributed to the fact, universally established by now, that Poland, in the post-war period, was relatively ethnically homogeneous. With this rather forthright statement expressed by one of the mothers who came with her two primary school children I shall move to the next part.

> When my children came here, they were shocked; Black child, Chinese child..not that they were…at our home there is no racism at all (Danuta, 2, works from home in small business, C).

6.3 Religion and ethnicity

> Some Polish parents don't tolerate for example Black people or don't want their children to be with Muslim children in the same class. (..) I always tell Sasha to play with everyone regardless their colour or religion but other Polish children tell her not to relate to children of other cultures.
> (..)
> *What's the current school of Rafal and Sasha like?*
>
> The school is very mixed. There are black children, with scarves, Chinese or Japanese, Polish.
>
> *The Catholic school, the one you are trying to get a place for Rafal and Sasha...is it the same mixed?*
>
> Oh no, that is better, much much better. I was there, the first impression is so much better. There aren't any Muslim children because you need to have a letter from your church. We want to move them for certain to that school.
>
> (from an interview with Zofia, 2, not in paid work, C)

6.3.1 Religion and ethnicity[62]

The above excerpt from one of the interviews shows an interesting dynamic, which has been an underlying theme when I spoke to the mothers about their

[62] In order to extend the understanding of this part, refer to Case study 6 – Lidia (4, university lecturer, B); 'living with and up to abuse' in Appendix XIII

ethnicity and relations with people of other cultures. On one hand mothers are claiming to be open towards otherness and explicitly celebrate the differences but on the other there have been manifold subtle manifestations of the less tolerant aspects. Possibly at times mothers were in fact unaware of their condemning remarks and undermining attitudes. They are both victims of ethnic unrest but also victimizing, blatantly or sometimes simply thoughtlessly, others. In this part I am exposing facets of mothers' religiousness (frequently leading to participation in faith education in the UK) and self-perceptions as non-racialised white group. I am looking at those aspects in relation to their children's educational trajectories and children's relative educational success. As it will be shown later, this may act as a form of a hidden privileging capital (social and cultural). The majority of new Poles (notably this does not apply to the sample in this study) come from lower, though not marginal, social classes, which could potentially preclude them from being academically and professionally successful. However, they carry the attributes (namely Catholicism and whiteness), which may facilitate their settlement and acculturation and at times serve as an advantageous resource in this process. Those self-perceptions as non-racialised group on one hand act for Polish families as a trigger to flourish and on the other, highlight existing unequal power relations on the religious, racial and educational arena. In this part I explore mothers' outlook on religion and the negotiations of their ethnic identity as having an impact on their children's schooling.

I have already mentioned the widely spread, among the Polish community, myth of Catholic schools as better, having stricter discipline and providing Polish children with adequate and moral upbringing but also more demanding scholarship.

> We wanted a Catholic school as we heard that Catholic schools are better and the rigour is better. But we are not practising Catholics (Klara, 4, not in paid work, B).
>
> I knew from various playgroups that religious schools were better so that is why a Catholic school (Vera, 4, not in paid work, B, 2nd int.).

Nevertheless, again there were more overt, like the aforementioned, reasons to make effort to get a place in a religious school for children but there was also, occasionally articulated, concern about the presence of Muslim children in such schools. Catholic schools served as a measure to exclude other unwanted groups:

> I think a lot of mums send their children to Catholic schools and this is because there is the notion of it having a high academic level but I think it is also the subconscious dislike of Muslims (Irena, 2, not in paid work, C).

> Why a Catholic school? In the beginning I thought there won't be Muslims and that was because of forum[63]. Now I think my arguments were silly, though I know that Jola is very happy in this school; they have more interesting learning activities (Roza, 2, not in paid work, C).

The distancing oneself from other unfamiliar cultures also means coming closer to familiar patterns of behaviour and upbringing. In this sense religiousness is linked to ethnicity; there is an assumption that Catholic schools will have more Polish children and hence there will be a more efficient and established system of helping Polish children integrate in the school's life;

> I wanted a Catholic school so that children could have religious classes and I knew that children will have it easier. There are helpers and they [children] are picking the language well (Justyna, 1, not in paid work, C).

The fame of superiority of education in Catholic schools makes mothers (and parents in general) implement various strategies to be able to secure places for their children in such schools. Vera, when her older daughter was moving to a secondary school, only investigated Catholic schools claiming 'they were the best'. The family applied to three different Catholic schools and Viva was admitted in all of them:

> We were keen particularly on one, which is among the 10% top schools in London. Catholicism was the only thing that was considered. Children have higher attainment than in other schools, I don't know why but I don't like the fact that it is girls only school (Vera, 4, not in paid work, B, 2nd int.).

In the following quote Vera makes assumptions that Viva stands a good chance of obtaining a place in Catholic school. She herself is Polish brought up in a Catholic faith, her daughters were baptised and she provided a letter from the parish's priest. Indeed this is how many Polish parents manage to secure places in their first choice Catholic schools. 26 out of the 40 mothers had at least one child in a Catholic school at certain point. There were numerous stories of travelling to Poland to baptise children for the sake of applying to Catholic schools, persuading Polish priests both in England and in Poland to provide

[63] The mother is talking about an internet forum which was used for recruiting the participant for this study.

them with appropriate letters confirming their participation in the church or choosing the right bench in the church in order to be seen by the clergymen.

> All mothers panicked about schools, nurseries, which are good which are not, how difficult it is to get into them and I applied to very many schools but I knew she stood a chance in a Catholic school (Vera, 4, not in paid work, B, 1st int.).

There were a few respondents who openly rejected Catholic education and one defined Catholic schools as 'hypocritical cradles of parochiality and exclusionary mechanisms' (Ada, 4, media researcher, C, 1st int.). The mother having damaging memories from Poland, as a child brought up in an atheist family, wanted to spare Adam from any singling out practices and reject Catholic upbringing for her children

> I do not want him to go to any religious school, it is the most important criterion for us. I do not want any influence on him at all, maybe I am wrong maybe here schools are not so mono-ideological but I have these imaginings of a Catholic school in Poland and the discrimination of children who do not attend religious classes (Ada, 4, media researcher, C, 1st int.).

Even though opinions about religious schools were divided, 37 mothers in the sample, though not all of the 37 identified themselves strongly with Catholic faith and Catholic practices, would send or would consider sending their children to a Catholic school. They used manifold justifications for such tactics. Only 2 participants were adamant they would not want their children to attend any form of religious school (Ada, Nina). 5 respondents mentioned in one way or another that they have moved away from church after moving to the UK. Fomina explains this phenomenon by the fact that they could be relieved from family pressures and as the Polish church ceased to serve as a centre for Polish community (Fomina, 2009). Nonetheless, 4 mothers in my sample, among them Urszula (2, waitress in pub, B), validated their choice by being able to relate to familiar Christian values, which Catholic schools promote:

> We are having a break from church (..) in Poland it was some sort of social pressure , I was brought up as a Catholic so we do look after it somehow today as well. (..) I chose a Catholic school because I thought that the upbringing, values would be similar to the one we were brought up with in Poland because English upbringing is so different. Maybe I am mistaken here but I have this impression that English children are more unruly. Here at least they have Catholic upbringing. In community schools there are different cultures and of course different nations, different cultures have distinct approach to bringing up children so I was worried that he wouldn't assimilate and could be isolated. I was very

> pleased that I could choose a Catholic school (Urszula, 2, waitress in pub, B, 2nd int.).

One of my participants gave an account how her fears of her child becoming a victim of ethnic conflict and of being discriminated against made the parents to decide to search for another (Catholic) school, 'where Witek would not be a minority' (Maria, 1, not in paid work, C). This story of victimisation was a valid argument for the parents to move their son to an allegedly white Catholic school. In this sense religion is linked to ethnicity while Polish parents frequently associate Catholic schools with white European intake. Their migrant insecurity triggers in them the act of nurturing the belief that they are bringing their children up in the native English setting for instance giving them the chance 'to learn real English from the English'. (Maria)

> It was a shock that there were only two or three white children in the class. I am not racist but I was afraid that Witek will be bullied as he was in the minority and we got to know one more Polish boy in his class, whose relative, a 10-year old boy was bullied by his class peers. It was a gang. The teachers were totally ignorant. Instead of talking to Witek in English they were asking us what words mean in Polish and were speaking to him in Polish. At certain point Witek was arguing with me that 'siadziaj'[64] is 'sit down' in English because the teacher taught him this. Two months wasted (Maria, 1, not in paid work, C).

So far, in Chapters 5 and 6, I have been presenting the Polish community in the UK in the light of being abusers rather than victims. The incessantly accentuated whiteness however does not immunise them from being victims of racial or ethnic unrest. It is crucial to point out that several mothers in this study have had incidents of being more or less overtly discriminated or apparently abused. Yet, they almost always would have ways to justify their victimisation at times creating an impression that their suffering is indeed deserved. The causes of their oppression usually turn around competition for low-paid jobs or being taken for those 'Poles who do not sin with their culture'.[65]

Some mothers have spoken to me about their children being bullied by children of other nationalities and claimed it was racially motivated. The abusers, in the mothers' views were most often white English or Black. The pattern of ethnicised and racialised victimisation often is allegedly replicated by the children by

[64] 'Siadziaj' is a deformed version of a Polish word 'siadaj' meaning 'sit down' which the teacher used in Witek's primary school in order to make him feel more welcome

[65] This expression was used meaning Poles who do not behave in the way according to societal norms and who can be unrepresentative to the narrator's culture.

looking at the adults in their surroundings who reproduce hostile beliefs about Polish migrants.

> Antek had a problem with an English boy. Tom's grandma has an aversion to Poles so Tom beats all Poles up for their nationality and as we do not want Antek to be a scapegoat so we told him to hit back. But of course it was contrary to the ethos of English school, we had lots of meetings at school, me, my husband. Now they do not disturb each other although there are still flashes of hate, John pushes him, John steals money from Antek (Ida, 4, not in paid work, C).

Being the victims of inter-ethnic animosities has not prevented Polish mothers in this sample from making notoriously invidious remarks about people of other cultures. The most striking feature of my dialogue with the mothers around the themes of ethnic relations and cohabiting was their perception of humans in the shades of black and white. Those, at times, blatantly racist assertions demand a comprehensive explanation of underpinnings of this conduct among my participants. The lack of acknowledgement of the diversity of Polish society means that children arriving in Britain have hardly had any exposure to other cultures or religions. This can be a source of misunderstanding and may give rise to xenophobic behaviour from parents and children (Majuk, 2007). The parental awe and admiration for their children's non-racialised perspective of people of other skin colour gives evidence as to what extent the experience and sharing spaces plays part in the process of learning of the celebration of diversity. I consider it is important to highlight the fact that the following comments all come from the mothers in the least educated category but this does not mean that highly educated parents do not discriminate on the basis of colour; their remarks maybe more coded and less explicit but equally prejudiced.

> Even recently we scared away her black friends, a boy and a girl.(..) I am not a racist but I think it is a different culture and I would never allow Basia to bring a boy from Pakistan, India or Negro home (Weronika, 1, hairdresser working from home, C).

> I am not disturbed …but I would prefer to live in a white area, because I think that white people are cleaner (Anna, 1, casual jobs, B, 1st int.).

> In her class everyone is from a different country, there are maybe two or three typical English so I think there won't be any racist attacks in a school like this as it is not dominated by one race or a nation. Pola for example doesn't see any differences of skin colour. We never talk about blacks or skin colour at home but we were worried how she would take it and if she would be coming home asking why other children have black skin but not at all; she took it as a part of her reality, as something natural (Irena, 2, not in paid work, C).

> She is the kind of child that if she is supposed to be good she will be good but then if someone ‘attacks’ her.. there was one black boy who often was picking on Polish children, so he hit her and then he hit her again and Sylwia returned and following this nothing ..[is happening] (Wanda, 1, not in paid work, C).

Although frequently experiencing subtle forms of discrimination, my respondents evidently perceived the concept of racism as remote to them because they understood it in terms of black and white. The notorious emphasis on Polish whiteness is associated with opportunities, which the 'superior' status of 'being one of their own' (Dorota, 4, medical doctor, C) lays ahead of them. As put forward in the introductory chapter, the narratives of ‘anybody can make it here’ are intertwined with condemnatory discriminatory discourses of cultural otherness. Poles self-ascribe as white and recognize that whiteness is an asset for employability, promotion and fitting in. 12 mothers, though not asked directly, have spoken about their whiteness as an advantageous trait securing favourable treatment from the indigenous English. This self-notion of their colour is a factor, which may play a part in ‘feeling good’ and aiming high. White, almost ‘invisible’ (‘the New Europeans are hardworking, presentable, well educated, and integrate so perfectly that they will disappear within a generation’ - Anthony Browne, 2006). Poles sense that their children may be favoured at schools and use it accordingly.

> Here we have more chances; it is so much easier to live here. Here..I don’t know the language they give me an interpreter. In Poland it is impossible and here I feel very good. It is I think because I have white skin, I don’t feel an outsider at all. In banks, in offices they are nice (Weronika, 1, hairdresser working from home, C).

> In my practice people come to me, not to my boss an Indian woman, because I am white. I know they will not say that to me directly but they come to me not because I am cleverer, more beautiful, nicer, my hands heal better but because I am white. (…) And there is also this position of superiority towards Pole. On one hand we are just the primitive, uneducated Poles who come here to work in simplest profession but on the other hand we are ‘our own’ because we are white so this is where our position of the GP is (Dorota, 4, medical doctor, C).

Polish children, as it has been apparent in numerous previous quotations, were predominantly described by the mothers as giving good example to other children and as disciplined and well brought up, according to Polish, usually Christian values:

> The teachers like Polish children. They are more disciplined than children here, all the other Polish children from his class went to [secondary] Catholic schools (Urszula, 2, waitress in pub, B, 2nd int.).

> Later when she learnt English she was always the best in everything. And I think it is so characteristic of Polish children (Lidia, 4, university lecturer, B, 2nd int.).

Prevailing political moods being a result of tragic events of 7/7 (the period in which most of my interviews took place) have not helped to subdue hostile, racialised bias among my participants. Roza gives an account of how the events of 7/7 influenced her phobias and even though she tries to rationalise them, she still builds up a pronounced and culturally fallacious stereotype:

> I do have fears, when I sit on the top of the bus and there is a Hindu man with a turban sitting next to me and he has a big bag. I always go down. I know it is because of the recent attacks and maybe it is irrational (Roza, 2, not in paid work, C).

Albeit seemingly innocent, this judgemental remark has a potential to replicate and reproduce stereotypes, which lead to further racial tensions. Interestingly, racism among my respondents has features of institutional racism, which powerfully discriminates the victims but at the same time lacks the 'personal' private aspect of this interaction. In a parallel fashion, racism in my study largely functioned on a collective level but privately friendships and fond interactions abounded. Let me recall Anna's (1, casual jobs, B, 1st int.) words where she claimed she would prefer to live in a white area, because she thought that 'white people were cleaner'. One of Anna's closest friends, her neighbour was a frequent visitor in her house and had a warm relationship with her two daughters, helping them with homework. This is how Anna reacted to the new school of her daughters when she moved to a white middle class area outside London:

> Being frank when I went to this school and I saw that there were no black or Hindu children, I was rather pleased, even though my neighbours were Hindu and we got along OK. But it is because when we were in the other school and there were plenty of Hindu children, they had Divali, they had this and that, holidays all the time and my children had a lot of days off. OK, fine, they are getting to know another culture but it was all a bit too much (Anna, 1, casual jobs, B, 2nd int.).

Roza's narrative, who on several occasions in our conversation referred to Blacks in various capacities, gives evidence that there is a sharp difference between a collective racial discourse and a private dynamic of interaction:

> I remember that in Poland Jola was so upset that she had to go to England and was saying she would not be friends with Negroes. But here she is and has many black girlfriends who are really nice (2, not in

paid work, C).

Ethnicity has often been understood by the mothers as children's ability to speak Polish and maintaining identity by knowledge of Polish history and Polish traditions. There were various motives why mothers have put emphasis on maintaining their children's Polish identity by linguistic acquisition. First, there was always a potential chance of returning to Poland where the children would have to rejoin Polish educational system and without the knowledge of Polish it would be almost unattainable to succeed in it. Second, in the era of globalisation when various forms of exchange are far more feasible than in the past, children have more opportunities to revisit their country and culture and thus to communicate with their relatives. While (good) Polish upbringing was continuously juxtaposed to the English (bad) upbringing, mothers insisted that preservation of language, traditions and in general of Polish values and demeanour at home may inoculate their children against the wrongful influences. Yet maintaining ethnic identity in children by preserving Polish language in the family is not always straightforward and effortless and several participants, particularly those whose children were born in the UK and who had non-Polish partners (e.g. Lidia, Vera, Bogna, Anna, Natalia, Greta) have expressed their dilemmas and frustrations related to attempts to teach their children Polish. Some (e.g. Nina, Alicja, Karina) have not manage to maintain their children's Polish and as a rule had regrets about it.

> She does not go to Polish school. I decided it would be too much on her, new school, new language; I teach her to write and read in Polish, also maths (Kamila, 4, not in paid work, B).
>
> We are planning to return to Poland anyway so we think that earlier it is better. She needs to have start from the beginning. Now she could still assimilate (Nora, 2, café owner, B).
>
> Initially I didn't want Alek to be overwhelmed by Polish because he was still learning English, now I regret because they say he would learn English anyway and he would keep his Polish. Later he didn't want to go to Polish school (Urszula, 2, waitress in pub, B, 2nd int.).

Many of the mothers I spoke to resorted to employing Polish domestic labour (cleaners, gardeners, childminders, nannies, babysitters or au-pairs). There is a very important economical aspect to it, as Polish labour was considered as affordable and with solid work ethic but Nina's explanation also throws light on another aspect of it and proves how important culture and ethnicity is. Employing Polish staff was associated with having more easy-going comfortable relations with people of the same culture, whilst, as Greta (4, project manager,

B) remarked 'small talk is familiar'.

> My nannies were always Polish. I specifically wanted Polish nannies; I just thought we would have similar attitudes. Language didn't matter as Tomek didn't speak Polish. I would always stick to Polish people, we have similar mentality and easy to develop relationship, it simply is easier to have a little gossip in the native language (Nina, 4, contract data analyst, A, 1st int.).

This section explored how religion and ethnicity impact on mothers' conduct in relation to their children's educational and social trajectories. In work devoted specifically to mothers and to their engagement with children's education, it would be erroneous not to mention the role of gender (important but unexplored here) when we deal with capital.[66]

6.4 Newly created forms of capital in migratory process

> We are Europeans rather than Poles
> (Maria, 1, not in paid work, C)

Certain forms of capital, which can help Polish children succeed educationally are deep-seated and associated with their origins and the past. I have analysed so far individual capital (which may also well be a result of new migratory realities), collective capital and ethnicity and religion. Being white, Polish, Catholic or growing up under a communist regime are certain attributes with which Polish migrants simply arrive with and which in a sense adhere to them like 'ethnic' or 'cultural' *habitus*. These forms of capital can be used in favour or against them, and although habitus should be seen as the product of social conditionings, which can be endlessly transformed (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990), in other words, it is virtually impossible to wholly renounce them and move on. Contrastingly, in this part I am exploring those embodiments of capital, which are formed in interactions with 'the other' or by reflecting upon new unfamiliar realities and which are direct and indirect product of migration. Hence the focus of this part is around issues of changing identity and developing new mindsets as a result of immigration. Newly created qualities may help in generating gainful forms of capital (e.g. being proactive in the scramble for good schools or legitimising and implementing segregationist measures) but may also impede on providing the chances of financially secure future for their children (e.g. develop-

[66] Gender has not been analysed in this work but it constitutes an important form of capital influencing strategies.

ing unfavourable according to mothers friendships). In this sense Polish migrants indeed constitute proactive agents within the volatile and unpredictable 'risk society' (Beck, 1992).

One of the vital features of living in a transitional state is already extensively examined faltering over belonging, both ethnic and social. Migration brings up issues of losing one identity and problems with the acquisition of another. Inside most immigrants, there is a tug of war going on, between cultural maintenance and fitting into the new environment (Block, 2006: 39). Identity is not something fixed for life but it is fragmented and contested in nature. In particular people who have migrated from one geographical location to another find that their sense of self is destabilised and that they are struggling to reach a balance (ibid.: 26). The state of non-belonging has been a disturbing aspect of my participants' identities. Revisiting their country reinforces the feeling that migrants have difficulties to identify with Polishness of geographical Poland but they also realise they are not fully accepted as full-fledged members of British community.

> We do not want to go back to Poland. Lots of things tire me there.. mentality. It is particularly visible when you travel there from here. We are already used to politeness, people being nice here. When you come out in Poland you can get so depressed, all friends of mine they simply boost who has it worse instead of trying to enjoy the little things of life. No, Poland is not an option for us anymore (Klara, 4,not in paid work, B).

Nora (2, café owner, B) raises the pertinent issue that even their children may have issues of dissolution of identity and experience discrimination, particularly when wishing to be socially mobile and wanting to attain middle-class status. In some cases this uncertainty of their position can work as a barrier when it comes to breaking through the wall of social divisions but in other, it can serve as a stimulus to work harder and 'make it'.

> I think Kalina can have a complex of an immigrant. She will always be perceived as an immigrant, however well educated she will be and she might have difficulties to get through to the middle class. Here we are strangers, immigrants, and in Poland we are also strangers. Here you will always be one step down.. maybe it is all only in my head? (Nora, 2, café owner, B)

Moving to another country brings about changes in self-ascription and produces a new quality which being an actualisation of cultural syncretism allows Polish mothers to function with a substantial degree of fulfilment and provides them with an illusion of idealised 'normalcy', life as it was back home before migration. While maintaining their Polish way of life and wanting their children to embrace

Polish traditions, on a different level the mothers want their children to integrate in the British society and ultimately fit in. Below is a quote from Maria (1, not in paid work, C), who I shall recall, was very adamant that she wanted Witek 'to learn real English from the English' and was rather concerned and upset when the teachers in Witek's school tried to communicate with him in Polish:

> We are not turning English, we live our Polish lives..we only eat English breakfast on Sunday. We buy Polish food, my husband is from Silesia so we mainly eat food from there. We have a Polish rhythm of eating meals. I don't like the food they eat here; all processed, you simply put it in the microwave (Maria, 1, not in paid work, C).

The aforementioned, newly formed perceptions of religiousness, where migrants leave behind the community and family pressures and decide to distance themselves from the church is another dimension of their fluid migrant identity. On the more practical level, several participants mentioned to me that Sundays, from a 'Church day' in Poland, turned into a 'family day' in the UK, regarding that many partners or the mothers themselves worked on Saturdays and could not enjoy time together with the family on other day but Sunday:

> Here we do go to church but not as often as in Poland. We need to have our Sundays free as this is the only day when my husband doesn't work (Zofia, 2, not in paid work, C).

Contrasting their own culture with the one of the host country also allowed mothers evaluate and validate the way they bring up children and the way in which religion formed their mentality and dispositions. From several mothers I heard voices about Polish children being more modest, humble and docile, as compared with children brought up in the UK:

> It is in our sub-consciousness. It is not that we want our children to be less educated or worse than their peers but it comes from Catholicism, the idea that we have to feel guilt that we have to be modest. We have this fashion of 'big bows'[67], we do not say 'thank you', 'good morning' but we are sorry for everything. We are not in the habit of going forward. If you are good at something, have the guts, go for it and do something instead of looking backward and being afraid (Sonia, 4, catering manager, B).

One of the most common perceptions in my interviews has been, as perceived by the mothers, the British society's different attitude to education, learning and schooling in general. I shall elaborate more on this topic when I explore transgressions and changes in outlook which mothers undergo in new

[67] Moda wielkich uklonow – meaning that it is commonly accepted to be grateful and humble.

circumstances however here I would like to accentuate that migration serves as a tool to generate rich individual capital in the form of aspirations and potentially broadens individuals' horizons when they have the opportunity to compare and contrast varying approaches and lifestyles.

> I like it here that in terms of homework. It is more creative and it teaches them to be creative; it is up to him what he does. I appreciate that they look in a positive way on a creative, individual thinking (Alina, 4, clinical psychologist, B, 2nd int.).

> I like the attitude of children to teachers here and vice versa. When I was little I was very stressed when I had to say something to the teacher, but here they are all very open, children talk to the head, children are treated as partners at school (Nina, 4, contract data analyst, A, 1st int.).

Unremitting comparisons with the more stringent, demanding and stressful schooling in Poland serves as a form of evidence that migration in the case of my participants has been an eye-opener; the realisation that there is a different way which does not need to be inferior is a significant leap in a personal and moral transgression. In the course of time, when Polish parents experience the more lax English education system, they reflect upon the Polish system as 'over-demanding and thus – even if 'objectively better' – possibly not the most beneficial for their children' (Trevena, 2012). Although this was not a recurrent theme in my sample, possibly due to the number of highly educated mothers who placed emphasis on scholarly discipline, Alicja recalls bitter memories from her school times in Poland and concludes that her child's well-being is more important to her than a strict scholarship and undue discipline:

> I just hope that Nela finds something in her life that she feels happy with and then I will be happy. She is in the right environment to make the right choices and decisions so I am not that worried at all. Her school is not that formal as Polish school, there is a lot of encouragement, recognition. When I went to the meeting I thought, gosh I wish I went to this school rather than my school in Poland, which was far less personal. My experience in Poland was a bit extreme I expect. I wouldn't want Nela to go through anything like that – it was not necessary, it didn't give me anything (3, admin work, B, 2nd int.).

Leaving behind the familiarity and comfort of social relations and spaces in Poland and venturing the UK may also bring about possible downturn in development of social interactions and networks hence of capital. Lack of trust and an apprehensive poise decreases the possibilities of forming social networks and capital (Putnam, 2000). As the mothers report, particularly deprived, bleak neighbourhoods of London are loci of bringing up children in an

ambiance of distrust and limited faith in other human beings:

> I have a dilemma now because I don't have any excuse to tell him why I wouldn't want him to play outside and one day he cried when I called him early. There was this guy with a dog ..I know it is my twisted mind because of my profession.. but he looked like one of these paedophiles that we hear so much about. So Marek was crying and I explained to him that I do not trust this man, though you don't want to bring him up in a way that he doesn't trust anyone…we have been brought up in such a different way. It is very very difficult to bring up your children in such places [the mother refers to council estates]. If we lived in a different place, perhaps it would be different (Alina, 4, clinical psychologist, B, 2nd int.).

Migration can be an intense reflective learning process on which expressions I will elaborate further when I touch on the theme of transgression. One of the most striking issues in my interviews were the mothers' discourses around pro-activity and dedication with regard to their children's education in the UK. As I have mentioned on various occasions, my participants learn fast that in the UK for the sake of children's success one has to be a pushy rather than a passive parent. 22 mothers have spoken about appeals in various capacities against schools' admission decisions. Greta (4, project manager, B) came up with an expression ' culture of appeals' when she discussed school intake and Nina (4, contract data analyst, A, 2nd int.) put it 'I have learnt that through appeals you can get far in Britain so I use it'. In contrast with Poland's scant civic rights, the UK appears to the mothers as a country where democratic and human rights are widely respected and thus it pays off to be a proactive and soliciting parent in the strive to assure good education for their children. Alina (4, clinical psychologist, B), deeply concerned about the education of her son gives an account of her appeal in the attempt to secure a place for her son in a Catholic school 'on the other side of the social divide', for which children from the council estate, where the family lives, rarely reach out:

> Marek didn't get to this school in the beginning but then later we wrote this letter of appeal; it was some sort of misunderstanding. One of the top admission criteria to this school was that you needed to be in the local parish but we were in the Polish parish in R. but the Polish church uses L. church for services so we thought it would be OK . We were planning to ground our formal appeal on this but after our letter, after a few weeks, they offered us a place (Alina, 4, clinical psychologist, B, 1st int.).

Another aspect of learning and of joining the game, which will be discussed in more depth in the discussion, are revelations about how a classed society functions and how an individual manoeuvres in the field of education in order not

find oneself at the bottom of the steep social ladder. It was apparent from the interviews, as it will be shown further, that mothers are acquiring prejudiced attitudes to the issues of class and that many learn to swim with the flow of social segregation. Alina's (4, clinical psychologist, B) comment very well captures this dynamic of discovering the mechanisms of closure:

> Quite often, because I am a clinical psychologist, they [colleagues] would be talking about middle-class people having better mental health, or I can see that in the medical profession they all communicate about people *'oh this person is from a working class background, this one from a middle–class'* and of course it is a judgemental way of seeing people and for me, because in Poland there is no direct link between class and the assumptions and judgements we would make (Alina, 4, clinical psychologist, B, 2nd int.).

Being on the bottom of this imagined social ladder may in fact work for them as their 'inapt' status is being reflected upon and counteracted. Vera, realising the inadequacy of her situation (she lives in a scarcely maintained high rise block among mostly unemployed residents) explains her how she will have to remedy the incongruity. In other words her context represents the migrant zeal in the making:

> Now there was a proposal to demolish this estate but residents didn't want. Of course I was in the group who wanted it to be demolished. But I think all in all it works for me because it will make me want to go to work and finally we will be able to buy something[68] (Vera, 4, not in paid work, B, 1st int.).

The following part on newly formed capital is divided into two sections. First, mothers' recognition of the newly generated capital as perceived opportunities for their families is explored. Next (6.4.2 and 6.4.2.1) I focus on mothers' trans-gressions beyond the familiar cultural, social and spatial spheres.

6.4.1 Perceived opportunities

As it happens frequently, workers, who come to Britain with the intention of either settling down or working only temporarily, bring over their partners and/or other dependents. Since 2005 accession this trend continues and various groups: professionals, such as medical or teaching staff working in their field,

[68] At the time of the first interview, after the consultation, the estate was due to be revamped. Yet ultimately it has been decided it would be demolished and new residential houses would be constructed.

university graduates working in Britain below their qualifications or manual workers with vocational qualifications, all try to start their lives in the UK. Undoubtedly, this process involves a range of endeavours, hopes, challenges, conflicts and frustrations but also remarkable opportunities on various levels; professional, economic, educational, social, and cultural. The new global economic system with the fast spread of information and increasingly efficient transport and communication, migrants acquired a strong cultural ability to form transnational networks and diasporas, which frequently are the core source of mobilization, resources and inspiration for capitalisation of opportunities.

The question explored in this part asks what opportunities migration brings and how these opportunities are capitalized by the mothers. Although the perceived by my participants ethos of British meritocracy will be explored in more detail further when I discuss aspirations, here I also touch on its exploitation in relation to their children upbringing and schooling in the UK. Do families differ according to their background in capitalizing the host country's opportunities? In this part I shall attempt to illustrate how they see migration as climbing both economic and social ladders. As a rule, my respondents perceived UK as a land of opportunities and they were determined to use these opportunities to assure the best possible start for their children in their new reality.

Most minority ethnic groups show high levels of children moving into a higher class than the class of their parents; while first generation migrants experience downward mobility on entering Britain they nonetheless tend to have high aspirations for their children. The newly acquired privileges have been shown to operate through educational opportunities and through parents supporting the next generation in achieving educational qualifications (Platt, 2007[69]). While perceiving schooling as a homogenous public service (Van Zanten, 2005), migrants perceive the whole educational system as an equal arena in which it is possible and worthwhile to compete and gain success. Also in this study, in majority of cases good and prosperous future was rather hoped for in terms of children's future rather than mothers' own. Some have given up dreams and placed all hope in children. At times parents saw their migration as a sacrifice and expressed experiencing various difficulties but simultaneously they were

[69] However, Lucinda Platt's research has also shown that a privileged background continues to operate alongside education in increasing chances of more favourable outcomes and that Britain is still a long way from being a 'meritocracy', this is being elucidated in the chapter on the exploitation of meritocratic opportunities among migrants.

adamant that the costs, though high, are worth of better prospects for their children:

> I had nowhere to learn English, all in work spoke Polish, all at home speak Polish , now I am a 'homebody', I am not going anywhere, I stay at home so I don't need to speak English. I hope my children will help me to learn English in the future. Even if it is hard here, I still believe that my children will have it better here and that ultimately I will feel good and I will adjust to life here (Justyna, 1, not in paid work, C).

There were many voices contrasting own (usually miserable) life in the UK with their relatives or friends' (glamorous and fulfilled) lives in Poland. Although many of my participants, particularly those highly educated, had certain regrets about what they could have done, been or could have had in Poland, especially by exposing professional degradation or their inferior housing situation in the UK, they tended to claim that their children's future would be more favourable here:

> I see his future here; here he has more chances to show his potential. I am sure that here if he finishes some schools and gets a profession he likes he would be able to find a job according to his qualifications and he would be happy (Mina, 1, casual jobs, C).

The benefits for the children were perceived in manifold aspects. Aforementioned better access to the whole array of professional jobs was an important point on mothers' agenda and 7 mothers have put it in the forefront when discussing the benefits of migrating. Urszula (2, waitress in pub, B, 1st int.) remarked that she 'would always try to push Alek to keep on studying but that in general he will have it easier here; he can start his chosen career and hopefully be satisfied while in Poland in small towns one has to catch what one can'. UK and particularly London is viewed as a place to make networks, connections and as a terrain for creating lucrative paths for the future. Ida (4, not in paid work, C) speaking about the benefits of migration for Antek mentioned learning about diversity from other children but noted that 'most importantly he will have the networks, even if we decided to go back to Poland'. Other mothers have pointed out formation of such traits as flexibility, open-mindedness and being more resistant to the fast pace of changing global economy and considered those newly created features as an advantage for the demands of contemporary globalised world.

> I think that changes, moving around and learning new things is always beneficial. Even though the beginnings were hard in general it is with a benefit for her [daughter]. She will know two different worlds; it will help her to make choices if she knows more about the world (Julia, 4, project assistant, C).

> Here Gabriel has a good school of life, new people, new environment, new language, it will harden his character and it is an advantage (Mina, 1, casual jobs, C).

The open-minded personality is a consequence of the exposure to the world of diversity and difference. 29 out of 40 mothers have spoken about the UK's diversity as a constructive and enriching experience for their children and frequently London was mentioned as a multicultural place of infinite opportunities where, as it was perceived, it is easy to mingle in the crowd rather than stick out as an outsider. Valuable changes in perception of variety and difference were a frequently mentioned outcome of migration and of an encounter with heterogeneity.

> I would prefer to stay in London, there are always greater opportunities of employment and there is a variety of people so here you are less different than everybody else (Vera, 4, not in paid work, B, 1st int.).

> Benefits? The language and a different approach to life; in Poland we are racist, a foreigner is good for a few days but then … Zuza was shocked in the beginning when she saw a black person when she was young. Here she has black children in her class, they have an international day when everybody shows things from their countries. She will certainly have a different perspective than the children brought up in Poland (Kamila, 4, not in paid work, B).

Mastering English language was a commonly mentioned advantage of family migration. Yet this benefit was particularly attractive for mothers of lower social or educational status where few individuals around would be likely to be able to speak English. 11 out of 17 mothers in my sample who did not enter higher education put forward learning English as a benefit of living in the UK while only 3 of the 23 remaining mothers (with the experience of university studies) mentioned this as an advantage. More educated parents and interestingly, those coming from large towns in Poland, have not necessarily considered the knowledge of English as any particular asset assuming their children would speak several languages anyway. Zofia (2, not in paid work, C) who in general has a positive outlook for the family's move, points out her satisfaction with her daughter learning languages:

> On one hand they have lost something, contact with the grandfather, her friends and also she benefits from learning English. Now she even learns French (Zofia, 2, not in paid work, C).

Maria (1, not in paid work, C), when asked if she would be willing to send her children to a Polish school rather than English, categorically refuted the idea supporting it with the explanation that learning English is a form of capital which they, parents cannot provide and treat it as an investment for the future:

> We want him [Witek] to learn proper English from the English, Polish he will learn at home; we can give him this capital but the English, it has to be the school (Maria, 1, not in paid work, C).

Several participants, notwithstanding that there were numerous heated discussions about the inferiority of English educational system, have actually concluded that their children are receiving better, because more humane, education in the UK than they would be in Poland. School is seen as a positive aspect of the migration venture and a very important contribution to the children's well-being. Even though perplexed and having limited knowledge of what is actually happening in schools, mothers emphasised better prospects for their children having completed the more practical and applicable education in Britain. According to some of my respondents (10 mothers actually expressed this idea in one way or another but there was no any class correlation with respect to this issue) children in English schools are valued as individuals and scholarship is involving more open-ended and lateral thinking rather than imposing the stringent notion of right and wrong. All this indeed helps to secure children's welfare and smooth integration in the host society.

> Here he has better prospects but the level of education is higher in Poland, in Poland they have to learn more at home. Here I got a letter that children have to learn maths for 30 minutes per week and for Poland it is nothing...but I do not know because in Poland children learn by heart without thinking and understanding it while here they have to think, draw conclusions and it is more applicable.(..) Here children like school unlike in Poland, here they are not told that they will never learn, that they are twerps, that they are worse etc., here they are valued,. Here if you say nonsense the teacher will say *you can think in this way but there are also other ways* (Halina, 4, medical doctor, C).

School in the UK was perceived as more relaxed which would contribute to the children's general well-being which, the mothers felt, was a crucial factor in their migratory move. For instance Julia (4, project assistant, C) mentioned that her daughter Daria prefers school in the UK since it is 'easier and more pleasant.

‘My participants, almost in unison, appreciated this fact:

> No she would like to go back home but she would not like to go to her Polish school any more. Here the lessons are more relaxed, there is no pressure, they don't have tests. Of course the level is not so high; sometimes she is bored but she would not go back (Wanda, 1, not in paid work, C).

> Children feel much more free, it is all … I don’t know… maybe more relaxed, there is no stress. In Poland, we all know, you have to sit at a desk with someone and you have to always learn something, everyday you have a small test, you have loads of books, different subjects and here it is not like that. (..) I truly believe that they do something in this school because when the teacher showed me her copybook …kind of book where they write in their free time..I could see she really writes a lot (Agata, 2, not in paid work, C).

English education is also regarded as one opening paths to the wider world and many mothers I spoke to were pleased that their children would be able to go to universities in the UK or other English speaking countries. Ada's voice captures this general feeling:

> Assuming that he [son] would study then I think it is better if he studies here. Of course I hope he will know Polish, I will teach him but I think that English education goes in a better direction than Polish (Ada, 4, media researcher, C, 1st int.).

Although securing a better future for their children is one of the key reasons for migration, and education is one of the crucial factors impacting on their children’s future opportunities (McGhee et al., 2012), in some circumstances the migratory move also gives professional opportunities to parents particularly if those were missed in Poland. Children's welfare as opportunity is commonly put forward by the parents as a crucial motif not to return to Poland where their children possibly would have fewer chances and on top potential problems with reintegration.

> We are going to stay here for good, we do not want to go back. There is nothing to go back to and my husband wants to make his career here; next year he will be a manager. If he gets really far, than he can work in Poland in Tesco but I doubt it would work because this would be ten, fifteen years ahead and Pola will have here her own life so I don’t think she would come back. If we have a second one, it will also be a teenager and we will not know anyone in Poland any more (Irena, 2, not in paid work, C).

Migration is also seen as climbing on a social and economic ladder. This

perceived meritocracy of the UK is usually applied to their children's future and success and such endeavours as moving schools and spaces within the UK is usually performed with this aim in mind. In this sense migration is an investment, a capital which will bear fruit for the next generation. For instance, when I pointed out that Sonia's daughter's English developed over the past months, she immediately implied that this was due to (a positive) change of schools:

> You are the second person who notices that her English developed, my other friend mentioned that her accent changed as well and I think it is because she is among different kids, different setting (Sonia, 4, catering manager, B).

Their children, in the eyes of the mothers, allegedly will have it easier to find employment and, there is a widespread belief that through hard work the next generation may achieve and become 'someone', meaning gaining a deserved status in the society. Particularly London is perceived as a city of opportunities and tolerance. Education and health services of London were criticised on many occasions by my respondents but, just as Klara (4, not in paid work, B) pinpointed, mothers claimed they would not find the same acceptance and liberties elsewhere.

> It certainly is a benefit for Pola. If she ever wants to go back to Poland, you know in Poland your certificates count, she will know English perfectly, she will have it much easier than any Polish child. Here it is easier to get a job, she can become someone, she can achieve something if she works and she wants (Irena, 2, not in paid work, C).

> The only minus is the lack of contact with grandparents. I am so relaxed here, I feel here so much at home. I love when I come out and the postmen who you have never seen before says hello. It gives me such positive energy. On one hand I am so happy here as it is all so mixed, so many opportunities, people of different cultures coexist happily, but on the other hand - those schools. But for schools and for NHS I would prefer living in a smaller town but there maybe I wouldn't be so accepted and there would be a problem with integration (Klara, 4, not in paid work, B).

The last but not least reason the mothers were often recalling as a benefit of migrating to the UK was the possibility of spending more time with their young children, sound welfare system and resulting from it better financial well-being. 17 participants within the study were actually content caring for their young children with only one (male) bread-winner at home. They were positive that the partner's income, combined with the benefits they were entitled to, was enough to provide the family with a good life, considerably better than the one they had

in Poland. Olga (1, not in paid work, C) put it, 'because life is better here, I do not have to work' and Roza (2, not in paid work, C) commented that in the UK only her husband works, they can afford whatever they want and that 'it was absolutely impossible in Poland'.[70] They often were telling me that, as mothers of young children they felt more relaxed, leisurely and economically stable in the UK. They claimed they had more time for bringing up their children and without the schooling expenses obligatory in Poland (books, materials, uniforms, school fund etc.) they didn't experience the financial pressures.

Indeed, in many cases (22 participants in this study unambiguously spoke about it) those were the economic circumstances, which made them migrate:

> We can live comfortably.. in Poland we had problems, conflicts because money was missing so if there are no money human being is more nervous, here it is more calm, I know I can afford more things for Tomek. In Poland I had to refuse things because there was not enough money (Urszula, 2, waitress in pub, B, 1st int.).

> I tell you here we have it much better than in Poland. We were also renting in Poland and towards the end of a month we had to ask parents for help. Here we have child benefit, child tax credit, working tax credit, housing benefit and his salary. We have enough and even some left (Zofia, 2, not in paid work, C).

Kamila (4, not in paid work, B) draws attention to the fact that having more funds for the household allows children to thrive and broaden their horizons via converting the economic capital into social and cultural capital (technology, travelling, learning about the world):

> One of the benefits here is that she has access to all technology, gadgets, internet. She can have all games she likes. In Poland we couldn't afford all this, we set up internet only when my husband went to the UK. Also, she would never go for holidays, here we go every year to the Polish seaside. So the greatest benefit is financial; seeing the big world, travelling by plane. In Poland there was no chance to earn money (Kamila, 4, not in paid work, B).

All in all Polish mothers I interviewed had no regrets about moving to the UK and, bearing in mind the fact that re-creation of Poland was feasible (friends, shops, food, services, frequent visits in Poland thanks to inexpensive airfares), the UK, with all its advantages was a better country to live. Zofia's (2, not in paid work, C) comment captures an interesting dynamics; living in a Diaspora

[70] Increased birth rate in the UK over the last few years has often been explained in the British press by the influx of East-European migrants who regard the UK as 'a paradise for bearing children'.

can in fact trigger community formation and community spirit among co-ethnics as they are coerced into making bonds staying in an alien environment:

> For me it is really better here; I go to a Polish shop and I feel like in Poland. I go to the playground and there are plenty of Polish parents so I made many friends. I am laughing that I met here more people in one month than in a year in Poland. This is a very Polish district so there are plenty of Polish children at school (Zofia, 2, not in paid work, C).

6.4.2 Transgressing

Liminality is as full of risk and potential and involves increased self-consciousness as is *social transgression* – those two notions are closely related. To transgress is to go beyond the bounds or limits set by a commandment or a law or convention, it is to violate or infringe. It is a deeply reflexive act of denial and affirmation (Jenks, 2003: 2). Social transgressions can provide a means for the mind to cross boundaries of thought and behaviour, which would not habitually be regarded as normal or allowable. The notion of transgression in this study is an important one while the processes of trying out, of breaking social norms and the feelings of being out of place and of awkwardness are an accompanying feature of assimilating new culture. The process of personal and social transgressions takes place under the realisation of migrants becoming aware of their identity, lifestyles or practices being distinct from those encountered in the host culture.

Social transgression can serve as a tool for an individual's mind to transcend the normal or accepted limits of thinking and behaviour. In case of migrants transgression can be an uneasy act of breaking away from values and patterns of behaviour present among the co-ethnic community and entering unfamiliar and uncomfortable social zones. As I have mentioned earlier within this study, the theme of being a middle-class migrant parent (within the class spectrum recognised within Polish cultural forms, which is usually in educational terms) with the heavy baggage of a specific cultural capital in an inner-city school has turned out to be prominent. 23 of my participants were university graduates and most of those had worked in non-menial jobs before coming to the UK. Consequently, I also aim to look at how this (highly educated) group of Polish mothers, being also part of my sample, is finding the process of identifying themselves in their neighbourhoods and settings within which they happen to operate, and how they

negotiate their perceptions of normal life and refute or assimilate features of their new contexts. In other words, it is a process of transgression taking place under ‘the realisation of the difference between ‘‘own’’ identity, lifestyle, traditions and practices from those present in the host culture’ (Rabikowska, 2010; 392). The lower educated component of the sample is also part of this analysis yet usually more prominent issues and internal conflicts were in fact apparent among mothers who, in the past, were associated and associating themselves with middle-class, educated ethos and lifestyle.

This part exposes tangible practices and dynamics of intentional and unintentional transgression of mothers’ own comfortable zones (cultural, social, spacial) carried out in order to create forms of capital, which can be turned into an asset aiding educational and social mobility of their children. Such processes mean sacrifices, anguish, negotiation of contradictory values but also potential and actually realised reward. By means of transgressing, they get closer to their imagined normalcy, that is the idealised state of prior-migration normality, while although they are 'outside' because of their ethnic, social or economic positioning, they are closer to the desired 'insideness'.

For many Polish families settling in the UK, children’s education becomes an important factor in various migratory resolutions including for instance decisions about place of residence, work patterns or even social and cultural circles. They frequently are compelled to negotiate these acculturative (because happening in the new, unfamiliar environment) processes and accommodate some undesired internalisations. Polish migrant mothers bargain their and their children’s aspirations and their integration in a complex and competitive social field of education in the UK. While they perceive the educational field in the UK to be complex and unfair, at the same time, over time, they quickly learn to legitimise various discriminatory practices. I explore this phenomenon via exposing various layers of mothers’ emotional capital deployed in the attempts to secure educational and life success for their children in the UK. Attempts of reaching out and of ‘placing their children one step up on the social ladder’ (Natalia, 3, works in financial sector, B) go hand in hand with the need to transgress mothers’ own positionality within the new environment and to apply strategies (Bourdieu) which may allow breaking away from the pejorative expectations that society holds on them or on their children. This selective acculturation in turn results in the acquisition of new identities. The whole process of new identity formation, as the mothers recognise, often bear emotional costs but also bring

into being (subjective) tangible opportunities. Implementing the strategy of panel interviews allowed me to include the factor of time as influencing first, actual advancements of tangible reality (for instance moving schools, jobs, places of residence, changes in material status) and second, changes in mothers' self-reflection on the emotional and social processes accompanying their migration.

Ability to transgress beyond the comfort of own social circles and spaces varied among the study's participants. Many have alluded that formation of relationships and interactions is easier among their co-ethnics and that they felt more at ease with Polish groups of friends rather than of other nationalities. Lack of English posed as a barrier but shared cultural codes had a significant share in this inhibition. The process of reaching beyond may be painful and demanding manifold renunciations but, as it will be clear further, courageously undertaken by many mothers. Renata, following Romek's move to a Catholic school expressed the difficulties of developing rapport with other, non-Polish parents:

> With other mums we say 'hello' to each other but I have not yet developed any friendships. They all know each other and it is difficult to mingle, it is normal that it is easier to get friendly with people of your own culture (Renata, 2, not in paid work, C, 2nd int.).

Differences and cultural idiosyncrasies can even create tensions while some Polish migrants reject values of the new society and tightly hold on to their old habits. While some are suspended in the hesitant liminality between contradicting values, others strongly cling to their former familiar frameworks of reference. Ida (4, not in paid work, C) for instance commented that when her son invited his Polish school friends only half of them came and that one of the fathers from Poland explained that 'what kind of birthday is it, somewhere in a club? Birthday party should be at home, with a cake and family'. Yet this difficulty to transcend own familiar culture is spread over manifold aspects of everyday life, from schooling habits, to music tastes, to food and in the study it was apparent that many migrants make attempts to recreate their Polish lifestyles in the UK, transferring as many features of their former life as possible into the UK:

> I am testing England because my roots are still in Poland. We mostly buy Polish ingredients, cook Polish food, dumplings, bigos[71].. I simply do not know the English market, I cannot find myself here, you know I cannot find the Polish-like cream for soups and nothing here matches the Polish one (Ida, 4, not in paid work, C).

[71] Polish traditional dish made with sauerkraut, cabbage and meat.

The educational arena is one of the spaces where transgression of own internalised values can take off when mothers realise about differing expectations at school in the UK. The unfamiliar schooling journey of their children in the UK initially has often been a source of emotional sacrifice, frustrations and fervent critique. They tend to juxtapose English educational system with the Polish one and try to fit in or force their own, formerly acquired, conventions and patterns in the process. Alina (4, clinical psychologist, B) gives an account of her first encounter with the, odd in her eyes, demands of English schools and reflects upon it how she would tackle the same issue being more experienced and aware:

> It is very different, the age children start school is different but also the methods used; a lot of teaching through play. I am not quite sure what I prefer really – Marek should have started school later, he wasn't able to concentrate so early, at the age of five. I remember he was supposed to write a creative story about an exciting night in the park. Verbally Marek could produce a lovely story but his written skills were seriously missing there. He started hating writing from this point on so I felt the school really put him off writing. Now with the other child I know I would ignore it, record his story and write it myself instead of torturing him and going through all those dramas (Alina, 4, clinical psychologist, B, 2nd int.).

The encounter with the little understood and unfamiliar ways trigger the individual's willingness, or need, to change and to try to understand the new, unknown or formerly rejected values. With time and exposure they may enter a phase in which they realise that an alternative system may be equally worthwhile. These transformations are well captured in Alina's (4, clinical psychologist, B) further reflection about her attitudes towards education provided by schools in England:

> I used to take homework literally and I would tell Marek to do it the proper way, you know like in Poland – just do what you are asked to do. So there was a lot of crying involved and of course whenever he was writing I would be correcting his spelling and it took so much time. But then at school they told me it is OK as long as it is phonetically plausible so I actually put him off of writing! Even though I wanted to help him I actually was putting him off as I was working in the opposite direction to the English system (Alina, 4, clinical psychologist, B, 2nd int.).

Particularly those mothers who have been in the UK for a longer period (Nina, Greta, Alina, Ada) or who have had distressing experiences of schooling in Poland (Urszula, Alicja, Irena, Halina, Anna) were able to see beyond their former point of view and recognise that a distinct system of education may have different goals and aim at educating individuals to find themselves in the

contemporary changing world. In Trevena's study (2012) respondents appreciated that education in the UK seems to be more 'marketable' in terms of the labour market and ultimately it 'wins over' the Polish one in practical terms. Also, contrary to Polish diplomas, British ones are recognised worldwide and finally, better performance of British economy is seen, by Polish migrants, as *inter alia* indicative of a more successful school system (ibid.) Above all, the mothers (e.g. Alicja) who had traumatic experiences of a demanding system based on memorisation or acquisition of pure theory have frequently commented that the English system seemed more humane, relaxed and that the learnt content was more applicable to real life. The time they spent in the UK also mattered, as distancing oneself usually requires time and a considerable exposure.

> You see now after all this time I wouldn't say that the education here is worse. It is very different. For instance as I observe Alek, here children are not bored at school. When he learns mathematics he learns the theory but he will also learn through practice. For instance subjects such as design and technology or food technology.. Alek really likes them. Again, drama classes; the child can show their talents in a different way and not only by sitting at a desk and learning theory (Urszula, 2, waitress in pub, B, 2nd int.).

> I am the one who is revising maths with her and Juan is the one who is revising English. And it is him who is always pushing, always competitive, always telling her to be the best and I am the one who is chilled out. I am always trying to make it lighter for her, more relaxing. I am trying to diffuse her stress; maybe it is because I was always so pushed in my Polish school and I don't recall it as a nice experience. Juan is always worried that Nela is not competitive enough and he would always ask *so what did your friend get* (3, admin work, B, 2nd int.).

Another sphere where my respondents felt transcending was helpful if not inevitable entailed forming artificial or constraint friendships carried out for the sake of children's well – being. Mothers made an effort to interact with parents of other nationalities and cultures and social standing, which often involved emotional pressure and feeling less at ease than if they interacted with their co-ethnics. However, particularly in the primary school, this kind of social networking, which was felt as awkward, was necessary for the social success of their children. Nina, spells out how she got involved in, an unusual for her, relationship with Muslim parents of a friend of her son Tomek. She points out that those parents are somewhat an exception to the rule ('but again...her husband is a diplomat' and 'but she is very nice'):

> They would come and talk to me but there is very little time when we are

> collecting and dropping children. There is one person I developed more relationship; she has got a boy as well and I want Tomek to be friends with her son so I began to talk to her but again she is…her husband is a diplomat...it is a Muslim family, she is some sort of mix and he is some sort of Zimbabwean – Arab mix and she is French and maybe some other mix but she is very nice and (..) (Nina, 4, contract data analyst, A, 1st int.).

Alicja mentions the pressure that she felt while exercising child-focused, insincere friendships for the sake of her daughter's good social mix:

> I am so happy that now it is her who has to do all the networking and socialising and not me. It just put so much pressure on me as a parent when she was in her primary school and as long as they make good choices than it is great. She travels by herself, she organises her own weekends with friends, they meet up (Alicja, 3, admin work, B, 2nd int.).

In some cases my respondents even mentioned that being away from the Polish community facilitates their children's integration process and they were happy to maintain relatively superficial relationships with other non-Polish parents if the children had better chances of English language immersion. Lila (2, not in paid work, C) who intentionally chose a school without a contingent of Polish children says that 'mums come here to pick up Darek, they go to the playground; if he was among Poles it would influence his English so I am glad his school is so mixed.'

Learning about existing unfamiliar social norms and having to fit in, in order to secure the company for their children triggers self – consciousness and feelings of uneasiness and watchfulness. Yet, violating those norms might constitute the precious moments when habitus misfires and new qualities are formed through the transgressions.

Here Alina (4, clinical psychologist, B) reflects upon her attempts to socialise with the English, which, due to distinct patterns of mutual relations, always culminate in failure of developing worthwhile genuine bonds. Nonetheless, the attentive watchfulness may prepare ground for transcending the original 'home' habitus:

> I could see that English people were not prepared to have certain kind of conversations with me. I could see the glass between us. I think I embarrass them with what I say; I can see it in their eyes. Whenever we are in a situation when I embarrassed my husband he would always tell me *we don't socialise in this way* (Alina, 4, clinical psychologist, B, 2nd int.).

Although transgression demands emotional sacrifices and exposing oneself as

'irregular' or 'misfit' mothers were ready to reach out for the wellbeing of their children. Here one of the mothers depicts the pain of her linguistic transgression:

> One day I had this situation that we went to the park and Rafal saw children playing football, you know children his age and he was asking me so much: *please enrol me* but of course I can't - I can't communicate. I could see tears in his eyes but I couldn't do anything. It was very disheartening. But I went and spoke to the coach and we managed to enrol him (Zofia, 2, not in paid work, C).

The acceptance of children's dual nationality and hence national identity was a recurring theme within this study. There were numerous expressions of negotiations of their children's belonging and on many occasions mothers have articulated their fears of their children having split and contradicting identities. It seemed that those anxieties work as a vent for allowing their children to practise their Englishness and to move away from Polish culture. As aforementioned, even though children as a rule will relate to English way of life and its cultural representations, Alina (4, clinical psychologist, B), like all mothers in the sample, hopes that she is bringing up a cosmopolitan citizen who will easily and flexibly function in various socio-cultural settings.

> I think Marek may get confused about his identity, who he is.. also the fact that his extended family is not here makes him disadvantaged. But he has chosen to be English, I think we are pushing a bit of Polish and Irish culture, we are both idealising our cultures our countries and one day he said to my mother that I praise everything what is Polish, dad all that is Irish so he will everything what is English. And I think it is fair enough because otherwise he would think *what should I be*? (Alina, 4, clinical psychologist, B, 1st int.)

Interestingly transcending cultural and national boundaries has been a stable feature among mixed (in terms of relationships) and more educated families as compared the less educated or educationally successful individuals or couples. In my sample, those Polish women who had Polish partners tended to socialise in Polish circles and only 4 spoke about having multicultural friends made through college or work. For example giving up Polish Saturday schools, particularly among more educated, as I pointed out earlier was a way of drifting away from the working class (often described as 'new') migrants, to whom the former could not relate. In many instances, other Saturday activities, which had the potential to serve as a capital when it came to selective secondary schools (e.g. music lessons, choir, theatre schools, sport squads, supplementary tuition) won over attendance in Polish Saturday schools. Alina's (4, clinical psychologist,

B) account depicts a dilemma many Polish parents face:

> He (Marek) doesn't go to Polish school at the moment. We had a huge dilemma because he got to a selective musical centre to a choir and the practice is happening at the same time as Polish school. In the beginning he has done both so he would be coming to Polish school after the break there but following this summer there was a huge expansion of the Polish school and from 10 kids it went to 30 so they said it would be too disturbing for the teacher if we were doing it again. So I decided that music was more important for his future. However it is not to say that Polish is not important to me, I speak Polish to him and he goes to Poland every summer for five, six weeks and speaks Polish there (Alina, 4, clinical psychologist, B, 1st int.).

This citation brings up another recurring theme, which will be the focus of the next chapter, that is of learning that schooling is a very powerful means of social positioning. Here it is highlighted as a transgression of mothers' sense of justice and equity. Despite the sound awareness of unequal chances produced by different schools, the mothers will make all efforts to place their children in the best possible institutions and treat their practices as legitimate. Anna (1, casual jobs, B, 1st int.), who comes from a village where there was only one school, in her first interview, says that before she 'was not interested, all schools were the same'. She commented that 'it is only now, after talking to a friend and reading Ofsted reports that if I found a good school for them, I would travel there for an hour'. Below is an excerpt from the first interview with Nina (4, contract data analyst, A, 1st int.) in which she clearly makes a point that the (out of question) school in the neighbourhood is for a different sort of children than her son:

> *Let's say Tomek does not get to the school you want and you don't have any other option… he does not get a place in any 'good' state school what would you do?*
>
> Well I would consider moving out or going private … if the option would be going to this Academy or move out I would move out to the good catchment or I would send him privately… sending to the Academy is out of question… He would not go there...
>
> *Why is it out of question? Why wouldn't you send him there?*
>
> Hmm… (laughing) … because it is not just about the teaching standards, it is about how hard your child would try in certain environments, how well your child would fit in…

Renata, although in her first interview commits to not talking in stereotypes and being prejudiced, in the follow-up one explains that 'poor people attend state schools' and she 'wants something else for Romek' and thus her choice was a Catholic school (Renata, 2, not in paid work, C, 2nd int.). The transgression of

sense of fairness and equality, one has to bear in mind, for many is also a defence against being associated with the bottom of the society or a means of reaching out of poverty.

The process of learning about segregation and stigmatisation within a particular alien culture can be distressing. Here Alina describes her journey of becoming socially self-aware, which in turn resulted in her self – censoring and rising of invisible barriers. In the following excerpt she refers to the stigma of council estates and how she internalised the shame associated with having the 'wrong postcode':

> You see I heard so many comments such as 'oh such a nice bar but so close to a council estate' and these are my colleagues [clinical psychologists] who are trained to work with everybody, they make lots of judgements about people where they live, what they do. They do not even realise it but they would say that they would never live there because it was a council estate, things like that so gradually I learnt that there is a stigma of living in a council estate and I learned to be ashamed of it. . I had to relearn to live with it and try to invite parents from Marek's school here. It was a problem for me (Alina, 4, clinical psychologist, B, 2nd int.).

6.4.3 Sequence of construction of migrant identity

The diagram which I present below should clarify how the concepts of 'misfiring' (dynamically, gradually or abruptly disposed to modifications and changes) habitus, liminality, social transgressions, *internalisations* and *legitimisation* are interrelated within the mechanism of migrant identity construction and integration. To put it in short, migration is a process of transgressions which lead to internalisations and by internalising migrants gradually accept and legitimise initially discredited values. Through those transgressive embodiments, dissonant values are being negotiated and new ones are being learnt, internalised and legitimised while migrants learn to live in British democracy and gradually absorb its qualities. This mainly refers to strategies used for 'closing off' (blocking or denying the unwanted), competing and winning, consumerism and self-organisation, individualism versus collectivism. Those values are often in opposition to the ones, which were promoted, and internalised by the mothers in the regime under which they were educated. The negotiation of contradictory values prompts feelings of guilt, shame, uneasiness and involves costs and sacrifices. Yet, while

the mechanism of legitimisation of social reproduction through education is taking place, there is a clear tension between a socially and collectively-minded outlook and a newly acquired, more individualistic, neo-liberal perspective.

In this fashion, integration is also happening through transcending and transforming the original native *habitus* via various forms of transgression and of selective acculturation.

The following diagram helps to clarify the concept upon which I drew when describing the mothers' identity transformations. It depicts a sequence of transitions leading to acceptance and legitimisation of adverse and conflicting values under the influence of prevailing social forces. It describes processes, which accompany the transformations of migrant habitus and allow mothers to cope with the incompatibilities of the unfamiliar host culture. There are four phases identified and they are explained below the figure.

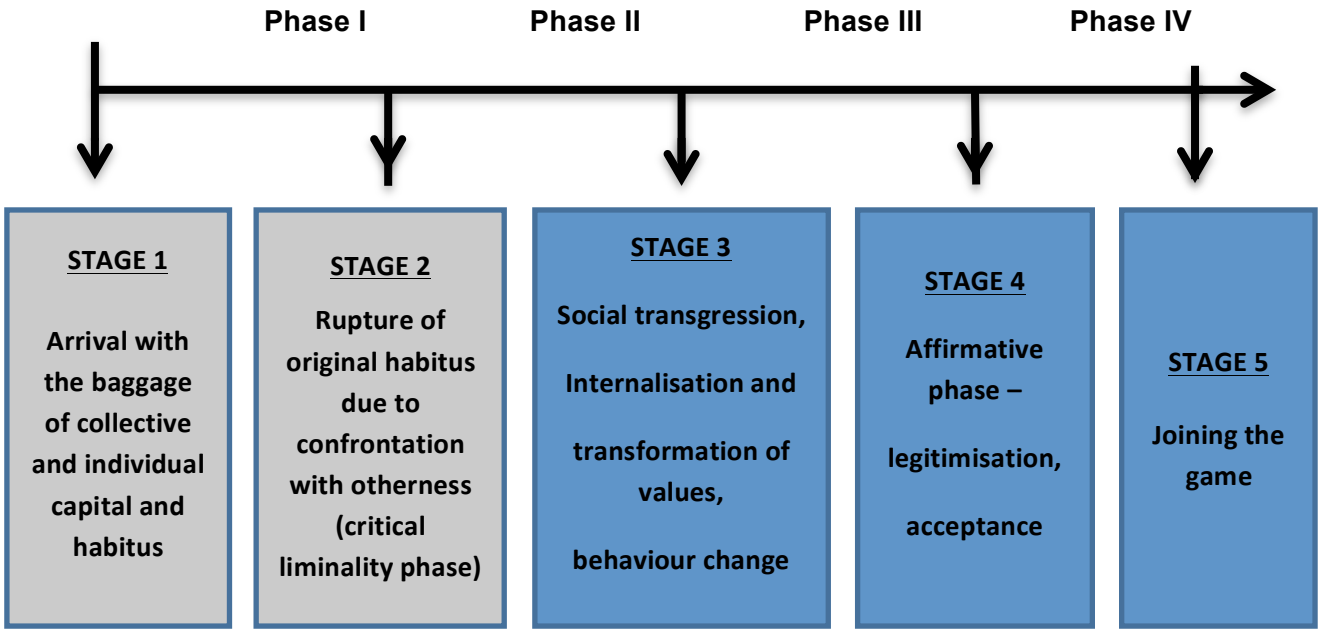

Figure 2. Stages of mothers' identity transformations

Phase I – period of initial perceptions, innocent/ignorant outlook, lack of insiders' knowledge, 'robust Polishness' in behaviour

Phase II – period of revelations and discomfort with own habitus, growing social self-awareness, liminality, critical attitude towards new values but also absorption of those values

Phase III – period of gradual acceptance, internalisations of differences, legitimisation of new values (which may be conflicting with old values)

Phase IV - period of taking actions that may be contrary to their original values but in accordance with the new host culture (via selective acculturation)

The analysis of the data allowed me to identify a model of a sequence of mothers' identity construction in their integration into the educational system in the UK. I have recognized five main points through which mothers are likely to traverse. The initial bewilderment and predominantly ignorant outlook on English education *(stage 1)*, gradually turns into the stage where the original habitus undergoes rupturing and results in a sense of liminal existence. This stage *(stage 2)* is characterised by negation and a fervent critique of what is being offered and required within the educational structures in the UK. *(Stage 3),* sees proactive social transgressions beyond mothers' original habitus and internalization of qualities and values contrary to their original values. In *(stage 4)* comes equilibrium, where a mother is likely to weigh all the pros and cons and have a more balanced image and an affirmative attitude to the newly experienced situation. It is the stage when she overtly gives green light to practices which may be dissonant and which had to be negotiated and when legitimization of practices takes place but in a selective fashion. In the last *(stage 5),* 'having the feel for the game', she may be ready to join it. It is a consensual validation and a collective belief in the game and its fetishes (Bourdieu, 1977).

Although this process is sequential, there is no timescale to it and being in a certain place on the continuum will depend on individual experiences, interests in the educational issues or for example, the mother's profession.

Summary of Chapter Six

Chapter 6 (*Forms of capital*) focused on forms of capital, which is affecting and deployed in the process of integration into the educational and social structures of the UK. It explored the shaped in the past capital (private, collective, religion and ethnicity) as it influences the participants' negotiations of their identity and

newly formed capital (social transgressions, opportunities). This chapter has analyzed the aspect of individual capital, coming from private spaces and situation provided by home, usually parents and carers. It has been shown that this capital can play a significant role on the way mothers practically undertake strategies towards education of their children (particularly in the form of economic and social capital, understood in the Putnam's meaning of 'social ties'). When those forms of capital are missing, the conversion is more difficult or impossible; education is not provided equally for all regardless of assets, as it used to be in Poland. Yet, this part also revealed how predicaments are attempted to be turned into invaluable capital and described those strategies, which could be implemented based on the available and newly formed individual capital. It showed that, as is the case of economic migration, the form of individual capital (particularly in the form of level of education or economic assets) has not prevented my participants from having high aspirations for their children and from applying strategies, which would assure their social mobility. The next part examined the capital, which I regard as partly responsible for this dynamic in relation to Polish migration – collective capital. On this basis of my analysis, I put forward an argument about the weightiness of collective, acquired through public nurturing form of capital, which I define as 'public-sphere capital', and which was formed via mothers' upbringing under the ideologies of the communist regime and of Polish Catholicism.

Chapter Seven

Class, strategies and trajectories

Introduction

Throughout chapters 5 and 6, I have tried to demonstrate that Polish migrant mothers venture upon British society, culture and socio-political scene with a specific set of values collectively shaped under the communist and transitional regimes in Poland. Seldom are those values not dissonant to the ones they have to face in the new country, yet the participants in this study have to learn to live with and accept values and rules which control and rule their host society. In the previous two chapters I have shown that the communist up-bringing and in particular schooling of migrant mothers from Poland is emanating through their conduct and outlook in their encounter with the educational systems in the UK. It ranges from everyday behaviour clearly mirroring the communist philosophy in which they were nurtured to a somewhat innocent and naïve perspective on educational in/e/qualities in the UK, this perspective also being a product of their communist background. This entails various features of the British education as theorised by the mothers in chapter 6 (6.2.1.3). Also those chapters examined the dynamic of liminality, social transgression in identity re-construction and the processes of absorbing and of construction of new, novel qualities (internalizations) with all the identity negotiations which accompany them.

So far I have concluded that socialization under the socialist regime of Poland programmed mothers to view (and critically appraise), in a specific way, those features of the British educational system which they see as being in opposition to the values that have been passed on them in their formative years. Chapter 7 adds a new dimension to the analysis, that is of rationalization and/or legitimization of prevailing practices and of the mothers' strongly meritocratic outlook. It also explores trajectories and strategies in the light of maternal class status and assesses its importance in the mothers' undertakings.

7. Class, strategies and trajectories

7.1 Social self-ascriptions and its bearings on the child's education

> I think this society is so class-ridden. I didn't notice it in the beginning, it took a bit of time to realize but… of course even in Poland you judge people based on all sort of things .. but rather who they are and not where they come from, what their roots are and what accent they have. For many, I will be here only a migrant who takes their work away and who doesn't pronounce word properly. I know that others here look at me on the basis of how I speak, where I live and who I am friends with.
>
> (...)
> Well for instance one friend of my daughter - some in her class are laughing at her [at friend of Julia's daughter] because she speaks with a posh accent. But her parents are not .. her father is a fireman and the mother I don't know. So I don't know where her accent comes from. She always studies a lot and is a very 'proper' girl and she is somehow an outsider in her class. The rest speak with a cockney, she [daughter] will also do it at home if the rest do it at school, this one friend will not save her. It disturbs me and I constantly correct her at home but what result it will have I don't know. This way of speaking is unpleasant to my ear (Julia, 4, project assistant, C).

Reading the above excerpt from an interview with a mother who came to London with her teenage daughter to join her new partner, one can notice that there is a certain paradox in the mother's narration. On the one hand she clearly recognises but determinedly rejects the prevailing in the society notion of classism and judging individuals based on their social belonging markers but on the other, she singles people out and ascribes them according to their class attributes such as accent or parental professions and exposes her preferences towards a 'posh accent' versus 'cockney'. It is the ambiguous interplay of values that has been a feature of a discourse the mother creates around class.

I have previously discussed the relative initial lack of class–consciousness among Polish migrants in the UK. They arrive in the UK with a tabula rasa of British social stratification. This unwitting unawareness of their own social standing and situating oneself beyond the class system does not prevent one from stigmatizing and categorizing others; perhaps it aids mothers to create a comfort zone and spares them the hard task of fitting into the existing system: 'I do not belong to any class here, I am only a migrant here' (Ola, 2, not in paid work, B). This alternative form of class-consciousness wears off with time when

migrants begin to observe social patterns of interactions in their host country. Alina (4, clinical psychologist, B), who has spent 15 years in the UK, reflects upon a distinct pattern of residence in communist Poland to the one in the UK:

> It is very different in Poland – after the war people lived side by side, rich and poor. Maybe it is different now and it is possibly going to change but you know before [in Poland] you could have a cleaner living next door in the same block to a doctor or an academic. They might have different things in their flats and different lifestyles but they were there, mixed together (Alina, 4, clinical psychologist, B, 1st int.).

They also find themselves discovering both subtle and more conspicuous class peculiarities and tend to be biased, as was shown throughout Chapters 5 and 6, against the working class ethos and lifestyle as commonly depicted. There was an apparent anxiety (11 mothers touched upon this topic) among my participants that their daughters might slide into a life of misery and benefits if they decide to set up home early and have children before finishing their education. As this testimony shows, this mother fears her daughters might well lower the family's current social location through socialisation within underprivileged schools:

> I just hope that none of my daughters get pregnant as a teenager, it is a disease here and I just pray for this not to happen and I really hope they will be well educated. I just want them to achieve the best of their possibilities. But I don't really think that my children will be better educated here than they would be in Poland, at least while attending the schools that they are attending. I always tell them not to speak cockney and they understand it but many children in their school speak like that (Vera, 4, not in paid work, B, 1st int.).

Schools in the course of time also emerge as a social arena and a space shaping their children's tastes, preferences and ultimately trajectories:

> School was the biggest mountain for me here, the steepest one. She attended a good nursery.. How should I say it so that it doesn't sound bad? I like the social mix here [mother talking about her daughter's current school where the interview took place]; you know it [the nursery] was sort of middle class. Then the council sent her to a school where they had places, as she did not get a place in her nursery (…) (Nora, 2, café owner, B)

In the course of time a few participants in this research felt that their status was downgraded and had reservations if not regrets (most notorious cases in this study were Alina, Sonia, Lidia, Vera, Kamila, Sonia, Greta, Natalia and Nora[72])

[72] All but Nora were mothers from group 4, that is mothers who were university graduates and could have had other postgraduate qualifications.

about their decision to emigrate. When the mothers find themselves in a contrasting environment (here: 'I can't compare myself to them') they would start to mark those, setting them apart from the natives, differences. They will also, most often implicitly, analyse how their status impacts on the socialisation and educational chances of their children. Although not defenceless against this quandary, a few mothers have expressed that their economic status had significant repercussions on their children's welfare and life chances. Sonia (4, catering manager, B) is one of the highly educated mothers whose new partner is not in a remunerated job, she has very limited knowledge of her entitlements to welfare benefits and has a relatively low paid job as a catering manager. Albeit she stretches her possibilities, as was shown in other excerpts throughout chapters 5 and 6 and has high aspirations for her daughter, she cannot afford resources, which other parents in the school can:

> My social status here is nowhere. If I compare myself on an economic level I am nobody here, I get less money than those cleaning the streets. Sometimes I am asking myself *what am I doing here*? Most of my friends are having good jobs in Poland; they are lawyers, journalists, bank directors. And I am just working class here (..)
>
> I would love to send her to a private school if I could afford it but anyway this new school is like a private school for us, comparing to her old school, where children learn horse riding, fencing and do kayaking. Families are very wealthy; I just can't compare myself to them. They, for instance, are going for lunches at midday when I am working. I am struggling but they were so surprised when I told them that I was working. They would say *'oh, you work!'*.. they were so surprised. I am struggling to take Hanna to school because I want to see how she interacts with other children. I want to meet some other mums and interact with them and feel more involved and go for tea or coffee but unfortunately I can't because I have to work all the time. My schedule is so tight; if I am not working I am doing washing, cooking, cleaning or working with my daughter. (..) I have a very tight budget. I do not have money or time to take her to activities. She would love to do ballet or piano as her friend always tells her how he plays piano but I can't afford it (Sonia, 4, catering manager, B).

Although there are practically no studies, which compare the understanding of the value of education by ethnic minority families as juxtaposed with white autochthonous working class families, Leathwood and Archer (2003) remark that the contrast is sharp. Many white working-class families may value 'holding on' and 'not getting above your station' while migrants acknowledge the importance of education as a means to a greater and sought-after social mobility. This is an important aspect of my study, where I claim that newly arriving Polish migrant workers, not inhibited by any 'rules of the game' and external social codes, or unaware of fields of struggles for power (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1996) may

essentially situate themselves socially beyond the context of class and its reproduction, not being aware, to their benefit, of what actually may prevent their children from succeeding educationally and socially instead of focusing their energy on the setback of lacking the insiders' knowledge and advantages.

Favell (2003) also maintains that the more covert, symbolic barriers persist and preclude minorities, who do not have the insiders' knowledge, from accessing the host countries elite's aspirations and services. He suggested that minorities' social capital cannot be compared with that of the natives who have inherited insider advantages. The emphasis on existing social hierarchies and the struggle for social reproduction in Bourdieu's approach re-emphasises just how disadvantaged new immigrants are, who are deprived of this indispensable capital. Yet, in the case of Polish mothers, although it is crucial to recall that more than half of my respondents were 'middle-class' in educational terms and occasionally also in professional or economic, this cultural capital, their home practices and accordingly the recently shaped (particularly through and within the educational and political contexts of their countries' socialist ideologies) habitus is close to or compatible with the institutional habitus (Ball, 2003) of the educational field in the UK. What is being expected from the families (e.g. parental involvement in the academic sphere, discipline susceptible to control, the ethos of working professionally) is already inculcated in their mindset and approximates to the educational values of the English middle-classes and the norms of the discussed institutions.

There was a general feeling and evidence throughout the interviews that mothers with little formal education[73] also took great care to make sure that their children were educationally well-groomed before they started school. Teaching them reading, writing, drawing, craft or simple calculations was a common practice among Polish parents regardless of their educational background. This was demonstrated across the educational and class range of the mothers in this research:

> Witek copes with school very well, from a very early age he was interested in letters, numbers.. before he went to school he could count up to 20 in Polish write all the letters in Polish…he could not write Q

[73] (i.e. Anna, Olga, Justyna, Maria, Mina, Weronika, Wanda in this sample)

Did you teach him all this?

Yes, he wanted to so I did it with him.
(from an interview with Maria, 1, not in paid work, C)

Anna (1, casual jobs, B, 1st int.), a single mother at the time of our first meeting, who, as she describes herself, was 'brought up in a small village in a degenerated family of alcoholics' and who never had any confidence or encouragement to complete vocational secondary schooling in Poland, still places a lot of emphasis on the educational endeavours of her daughters. Even though she claims that she doesn't 'have any self-confidence' and 'always feels she is worse than others and at the bottom' (second interview), she talks about academic success of her daughters with a healthy amount of zeal and enthusiasm:

> They are both on the top shelf … the young one reads very well, has a great memory, the other, I think, had dyslexia but is very ambitious and is a very good pupil. The other is more lazy and if something is more difficult she says 'no'.. I don't want her to give up school like me, to follow my pattern (Anna, 1, casual jobs, B, 1st int.).

What is more, my portrayal of the analysed group does not necessarily support the abovementioned contention of Favell. Newly arrived migrant workers, not inhibited by any 'rules of the game' and external social codes, or unaware of fields of struggles for power (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1996) may bring with them high expectations with regard to their children and may make attempts to fulfil those expectations. This also applies to aspirations for the educational futures of their children as expressed by the mothers, particularly in respect of the value which they place on education and everything that surrounds it and to how this meaning influences their perspectives on educational or professional choices for their children.

Bauman (1990: 116) also draws attention to the dark side of the struggle to succeed and argues that when individuals find out that their dreams are unrealistic and that the probability of overcoming the odds is virtually nil, they, plunging into fatigue and disenchantment, will give up the values that they cherished in the past. This contention is open to further research and to what the future holds, however I see two significant aspects, which may prevent Polish migrants and their children from such a downturn. First, their whiteness constitutes for them a form of social capital which, as they think, privileges them academically and functions as an invisible but powerful cultural resource aiding parents and their

children in the school setting (Morris, 2005). While exposing to me their suffering from conspicuous forms of prejudice, the interviewed mothers understood racism as irrelevant to them because they were only embracing it in terms of skin colour. Second, as discussed, the mothers set their sights on unlimited possibilities of prospects in the new host country.

I have already pointed out that many Polish families live below the poverty line not even realising it. Nonetheless, with a few exceptions, the majority of my respondents would not be willing to admit that they are at the bottom of the pecking order but, regardless of their social standing in the UK, defensively place their status as 'somewhere between the poor and the rich' (Greta, 4, project manager, B). This is also underpinned by the stance they habitually (via habitus) take on their class self-ascription; normality essentially means for them not being at the extremes of the social order; neither among the marginality of pathology and underclass nor among the 'excessively affluent and posh'. This stance is reflected in the defensive attitude that the mothers quoted below took on the issue of the choice of schools for their children. Mariola (4, not in paid work, B) for instance cherished the fact that her son obtained a place in a selective (non-paying) grammar school rather than in an independent school of which ethos she rejected.

> I am glad he got to a grammar school rather than the private he was applying to. I didn't like the atmosphere of the private schools. I think they would consider us being too poor and having different values. You see, we have not had money for generations. We didn't want Arek to be ashamed of us (Mariola, 4, not in paid work, B, 2nd int.).

> Private schools have their pluses and their minuses. Plus is that the educational level is certainly higher and the minus is that everyone is rich. (..) Children there have access to more, to everything, particularly material things and I wouldn't like Romek not to be able to afford what others have such as motorcycles or cars and he could have problems with that (Renata, 2, not in paid work, C, 1st int.).

This desire for being average, 'in the middle' is closely related to the search for suitable social niches where mothers can satisfy their negotiations of desired 'normality'. This discourse around being in between the irregular and regular is perceptible in almost all the conducted interviews. Here, Renata explains her projected 'normalcy[74]' via frames through which she, as Goffman puts it

[74] Normalcy here denotes return to the way of life which mothers they lived before their migration. In the early twentieth century, President Warren Harding popularized the term normalcy with his slogan: "return to normalcy," about getting back to normal life after the war. Following this, the word has been used often instead of "normality."

(Goffman, 1974: 21), 'locates, perceives, identifies and labels' social occurrences in her latest context:

> I don't feel like a poor immigrant from Poland here . . . we are not very rich, we are not even rich, but we live like most of the people here; we don't have cars, we do not play tennis, our children are not in private schools . . . but I am not sure this is what I want in my life . . . that a Ukrainian woman cleans my house and I run with a tennis racket... No . . . I want a normal life; I never wanted a big house with a swimming pool and servants, my priority is happiness (Renata, 2, not in paid work, C, 1st int.).

There was a prevalent spoken desire for the children to be in schools, which are balanced in terms of ethnic composition, social background, abilities or faith. Yet, this spoken wish was occasionally disclosed as untruth when 'between the lines' I could read their more sincere conceptualizations (for example Zofia p.165). In the following quote Alicja gives a rich account of how she situates herself socially within her daughter secondary school. She approaches the subject with the notion that she is 'one of them' due to the wealth of diversity within the school:

> The academic level is so high and she is in all the top sets, they are divided according to abilities. Her friends have similar interests; they are equally intellectual so she is thriving. All her friends are very nice, very creative so they meet up and all together are very good friends. There are children from various backgrounds, there are upper middle class children, nice type of middle class, there are children who are being driven by a chauffeur to school, children of different nationalities, black children, a few Muslim girls, some Indian. Her best friend is actually Indian. You see when I go to parents meetings, there is an English posh person, there is a person with a foreign accent, there is someone who speaks cockney but they all happily ask questions and they are not afraid to ask. They are a group of 5 best friends and it is such a mixed multicultural group; they are from all over the world.
> (…)
> I am very happy she is in this school. It is good for her to experience the real world, to interact with all sort of people and to make choices of what she likes and dislikes. She would not have this opportunity in a private school. It is a stimulating school (3, admin work, B, 2nd int.).

7.2 Negotiating values

> I still don't understand. How can it be that in one school you have a mix of different nationalities and then in another you have just one culture? In some schools you have well off, affluent, educated parents, in other only those on benefits and without education (Nora, 2, café owner, B).

In this part I aim to shed light on how mothers negotiate dissonant values, which they learn to rationalise and internalise through living in the British democracy. This mainly tackles strategies used for closing off, competing and winning, individualism versus collectivism, consumerism and self-organisation. Those discussed values were often in opposition to the ones, which were promoted, and internalised by the mothers in the regime under which they were educated. Negotiating contradictory values prompts feelings of guilt, shame, uneasiness and involves costs and sacrifices. My participants felt that the situation in which they were involved, and frequently trapped, was not ethically sound or fair for them, but nonetheless they were structurally coerced to have their share in wrongdoing. There were, for instance, numerous manifestations of constant weighing of the pros and cons of private and public schooling where the children would have more chances of joining the educational elites of the country. Alicja, justifies the course of action after her daughter failed to get a bursary in an independent school:

> I am happy Nela is in this school, she can easily relate to people who are like her, she has choices and it is also good for her to see the real world that there are girls who behave in a certain way, she can see what she doesn't like. I wouldn't like her not to fit in and in a private school, I would always have it at the back of my mind… you know her not skiing in the Alps (laughing…)[75] (Alicja, 3, admin work, B, 2nd int.).

Nevertheless, as was exposed in Chapter 6 when I discussed, bringing up many examples, the processes of negotiation, transgression and internalisation, with time and experience individuals adapt and make initially rejected values legitimate. On the one hand Alina (4, clinical psychologist, B, 2nd int.) dislikes categorising people 'into drawers' but as she herself aptly notices, she herself is being drawn into reproducing stereotypes, which she resents:

> (..) and then the Irish mother and the father English… they are middle class - I can say by their profession, the house they have and their lifestyle. You see, I can say that the middle class kids would have more structured activities every day; they wouldn't go to after school club every day. I talk about them in this funny way because I resent the class system so much and it took me some time to work it out but now I am in it so I am using it as well and I tend to 'put people into drawers' (4, clinical psychologist, B, 2nd int.).

This mother, brought up with distinct values of sharing and cohabiting ('in

[75] The mother refers here to another part of our conversation (see p. 214).

Poland after the war people lived side by side, rich and poor') (Alina, 4, clinical psychologist, B, 1st int.) and, later, experiencing segregationist measures and behaviours in the host society [76] has been undergoing an internal struggle between her own values and those imposed by her present environment. The fact that the mother is a clinical psychologist and works with people 'from all walks of life' as she puts it might have contributed to her dilemma and emotional discomfort:

> I want Marek to respect people no matter what backgrounds they have and there are so many subtleties in his upbringing and how to go about it. What will I tell him – why aren't you allowed to play with these boys? Because they are from council estates or because they are poor? Because their mothers don't care? When they do something obviously wrong, if, for example, they swear or do something very naughty – yes, but otherwise I can't justify it (Alina, 4, clinical psychologist, B, 2nd int.).

Vera realises that her exclusionary measures may be segregationist and indeed xenophobic. She articulates it by saying that she 'doesn't want to be a snob' which would imply that she does not want to produce a sensation that she is feeling superior to her neighbours. She is aware that not allowing her daughters to play outside with other children whose behaviour is not within the family remits, is not morally acceptable.

> I don't want to be a snob but when we moved here and the girls started to play in the playground with other children and after about two weeks they started to speak "b'tle of w'ter", then I forbid them to play outside. But now I always tell them not to speak in this way (Vera, 4, not in paid work, B, 1st int.).

Vera also observes that in Poland, educational segregation was not as apparent as it is in her new host country. She highlights the fact that in the UK there are triggers, which can tacitly and more overtly aid social and educational sorting while the private system creams children off by selective exams at an early stage:

> One of the mums, who has a girl one year older than Giza, already has private tutoring to get to a private secondary school. You see I would prefer private schools not to exist because they only trigger segregation but of course you cannot stop it, they have the right to exist. In Poland we didn't have them in communist times but you see in Poland everyone had more or less the same; now it is all changing of course. Here schools are better or worse depending where you live, it is so much more extreme than in Poland. Here it is the norm that if you have money you live in a better neighbourhood and your children go to better schools

[76] One of the other mothers at Marek's school, when she learnt where Alina lived asked her ' oh, isn't it a bit rough there?' Alina recalled this incident in both interviews and claimed it had a profound effect on her future interactions with middle class white English parents.

> but it is not like that in Poland (Vera, 4, not in paid work, B, 1st int.).

Similarly, Dorota (4, medical doctor, C), who works as a GP in the UK, sees the inequalities in the making (p. 148)[77] and feels apologetic about the situation which she thinks functions as a vicious circle but she does not act upon it but rather reinforces the socio-economic gap by sending her daughters to a school in an affluent middle class area:

> I would avoid such schools, we were thinking that we can drive to work but children should be in good schools, they would probably assimilate but I would not be pleased (..) I would not look at the social status of parents in general but in schools where there is a big percentage of children with free school meals they are usually children from deprived areas and if you look at the ofsted reports they are on the bottom - it overlaps and they have a lot of children with special needs and children who come from abroad (Dorota, 4, medical doctor, C).

7.3 Aspirations and accommodations: – mothers' emergent 'meritocratic' outlook

> Perhaps because we are poorer and we don't have such great facilities in Poland, pupils are more motivated to seek out possibilities for themselves (The Daily Mail, 26 October 2007).

One of the most striking features of my interviews with the Polish mothers who settled in the UK was the relentless emphasis and robust belief that the UK provides an ideal ground for practising meritocracy and that they had a high regard for its value. The UK is seen as a place where 'it is more feasible than in Poland to say that to want is to be able' (Polish internet forum, participant[78]) and where anybody can make it. Giving credence to individualism, neoliberal values and the acceptance that well-being has to be hard-fought for by one's own effort and talents may appear peculiar when juxtaposed with the socialization of most of these mothers under a communist regime. However, it appears as if this meritocratic zeal was possibly an outcome of personal involvement in the political process of collective decommunisation (Galasinska, 2010). It is also this determined stance of being ready to compete and win which gives rise to the

[77] The mother says: 'We were in the school where most children were Bangladeshi, and it was said that the school is doing so well, that they had such a jump because of some kind of very novel approach and the head was so proud of it while showing us around and at that moment this man from PCT he was mumbling very quietly *but none of your children will go to this school anyway, it is obvious* '

[78] Cited with permission

stigmatization of the unemployed or those on benefits which in turn helps the mother to perceive herself as normal because she is contrasted with the discredited and abnormal (Burns, 1992). My participants' children were almost always (with the exception of children who had some form of learning difficulties) presented to me in the interviews as very able, highly knowledgeable and ready to compete in the educational arena with native children. For instance the mothers were alluding incessantly to the fact that their children were in top sets and possibly, for a migrant whose children arrive to the UK with no or limited knowledge of English, this serves as a reward and an illusion of catching up with the 'regular', the academic 'norm' or even outperforming it. This indicates for them that as migrants they cease to be a marginalised, lagging behind entity but instead they constitute part of the game.

This readiness to participate in the rat race is well exhibited in one of the highly educated mothers' comments: 'Antek is a natural learner who will either get a bursary based on his mathematical talent or get into one of the two grammar schools nearby.' The mother is ready to compete in the meritocratic race and this confidence in her child's abilities works as a certain strategy, a sort of self-winding machine to participate, compete and potentially win. High aspirations combined with confidence that hard work deserves accomplishment pave a future full of hope and expectations of a 'normal' life. She adds: 'I am not working at the moment but as soon as my English improves I am not going to wait for someone to give me a job'! The futurity of normality resonates in my participants' voices and acts as an engine of hope, an engine for survival and for avoiding failure; what is good is situated ahead and this gives the migrants a stimulus to strive. The dynamic force to seize the opportunities that meritocracy offers them, as was also highlighted in the IPPR report (Pollard et al., 2008) is additionally triggered by aforementioned and testified weak class self-ascription among Polish migrants.

All the mothers in this study, if their child happened to sit at the 'top table' and they happened to know about it, were pleased about their children being taught together with 'the most capable pupils at school' (Alina, 4, clinical psychologist, B, 1st int.). For instance Alina reports that her son knows that he sits at the best table and she, despite pinpointing this as being wrong – 'children are not supposed to know about the concept' – is in fact gratified and glad her child is building self-confidence by being aware of the fact. Considering that in Poland

in the past children have not been academically streamed, this has come up as a worthwhile topic for the mothers to highlight.

> He sits at the best table (laughter). I like it because I know that in Polish school there is no division and of course I like that he has more challenging things to work on and that he is not completely bored. But I don't understand how it works in practice though I am happy with the idea. It took me a while to work it out that they sit at different tables, it was the teacher who told me that he was in the group of the most capable pupils at school. (...) It is quite funny because the whole idea is that children do not know about the tables, that is why maybe they all the time change colours around, but Marek always knows that he is at the best table (Alina, 4, clinical psychologist, B, 1st int.).

The following testimony comes from a mother who, having a rather defensive attitude, all in all is visibly content with her daughter's school and is ready to assist her to meet the heightened expectations and demands that teachers put on her.

> With Sylwia it is like that… (…) The school could see that she could speak some English. She is on the highest level in maths now. She has never had physics [the mother probably means science] before but my Sylwia is already on the top level in physics, in English literacy – the same. They can see that she knows and they give her more homework, they pull her up and up and sometimes she would even become angry; 'Mum, I don't know it'.. but then my husband explains and that's it. 'Mum – they think I am so clever.' But she must deserve it if they treat her like that. I am very happy, really (Wanda, 1, not in paid work, C).

Another participant talks about the highest band that her son is identified with and simultaneously emphasises his migrant status in it. The disadvantageous circumstance of being a migrant, and at the same time being successful, functions as a form of agency which fosters maternal confidence with regard to her children's future.

> He is in Y8 in St. Peter's and he is very pleased with the school. I am also very happy because he is the best in science, in maths and English. He is in the highest band in all subjects. I think I can be proud considering that he came only 4 years ago (Urszula, 2, waitress in pub, B, 2nd int.).

The following quotes are further evidence of the phenomenon; the imagined 'giftedness and talent' works as a self-winding machine, as an engine to push oneself even further.

> My children are all doing so well at school; my daughter got all level 5 in her SAT exams. So they never had any problems, Remek is very good at maths and science (Aniela, 4, voluntary work, B).

> She [Rena] was performing in all school plays.. she was the most popular girl at school, by all competitions, all results, the prettiest, the most active, involved in all school activities which made her very happy and I am worried about this 'most most most'.(..) Now I have learnt already that it is them who input more value into the schools than they take from there (Lidia, 4, university lecturer, B, 2nd int.).

> In her school there are 11 or 12 Polish children and in her class in the top set there are 4 or 5 Polish children and …anyway from my experience all Polish kids sit at best tables at school (Kamila, 4, not in paid work, B).

Meritocracy, the concept of which origin I have earlier described in Chapter 3 fundamentally means that one's social location is determined by the combination of one's effort and intelligence. In popular understanding meritocracy is perceived as a good thing in and for society and that it is a system which is the fairest of all which eliminates distinctions ascribed by birth. Yet, meritocracy is also seen as a factory producing a meritocratic class, which, by means of social reproduction, recreates itself with its own privilege and power. In other words, on the one hand meritocracy stands as a symbol of equal opportunities but on the other it is based on intellectual challenge and, inevitably, the survival of the intellectually fittest. 'Education has put its seal of approval on a minority' (Young, 2001) and ultimately meritocracy became a generator of social sorting. Poles maintain the legitimacy of meritocracy by exposing their readiness to compete in the rat race. Mariola, when reflecting on her son's achievement asserts:

> The teacher was always saying he is coping very well but we were saying 'but why isn't he the best? In the report it was always he is very good for a foreigner, last year we did not have this comment any more, he is very good at maths (Mariola, 4, not in paid work, B, 1st int.).

Ada (4, media researcher, C) takes it for granted that her son is sticking out from the crowd by being outstanding and by being offered special treatment from teachers. The individual teaching program for Adam and the exclusive entitlement is an unquestionable flattery for the mother:

> Adam doesn't complain about the school and he is the top in everything, they give him his own program as he would be bored with the Y2 program. So now, the teacher told me, he is finishing Y3. He is also in a school council (Ada, 4, media researcher, C, 2nd int.).

Consequently, Polish mothers perceive the opportunity to compete, put in a lot of effort and accordingly harvest fruits as, always missed in their eyes, normality (apparently they were not offered that chance in communist Poland) and as a

feasible weapon against the insecurities and precariousness of a new and unfamiliar world. A positive outlook in the midst of migratory unpredictability and vulnerability, gives migrants hope and conceivably produces better prospects:

> When I think about us here, everything is going better, everything is moving forward and every change is a positive change, a change for the better. I don't think our status has dropped, in Poland I had all I wanted but it is the same here so far (Renata, 2, not in paid work, C, 2nd int.).

A firm aspiration to achieve a desired status according to meritocratic virtues appears in the mothers' discourses as a normative quality, without any notion of seeing it as socially unfair or detrimental to the 'intellectually unfit'. It is enough to recall the comment of 15-year old Aleksander Kucharski who, disillusioned with the education offered to him in the UK, went back to his native Lodz. He claimed that '[in the UK] the teachers didn't test knowledge, only effort.' Any attempts made by the authorities, in order to oppose the negative outcomes of selective meritocracy, are being met by the rejection of the potential value of offering non-meritocratic chances of success and social mobility.

In this study there were numerous manifestations of this premise when the mothers articulated the importance they place on their children's education as a means for future social and professional success. Eliza (2, not in paid work, C) and Urszula (2, waitress in pub, B) highlight their readiness to supplement their sons' education with a fee-paying tuition in order for him to achieve high academic standards. Bogna (3, bookshop assistant/waitress, B) does not shy away from zealously 'pushing' her daughter to give her the best chances in the future.

> If they had only told me this two years ago: *he is weaker, he came from a school with a lower level, enrol him for Brains*[79] I could have done it two years ago, I cannot find out things by myself but they would never do it…(Eliza, 2, not in paid work, C).*

> A private teacher was coming from his current primary school. She was coming once a week and they would be doing revision for a few months (Urszula, 2, waitress in pub, B, 1st int.).

> It is up to her what she is going to do as long as it is either working or studying, that is the choice that my dad…parents gave me when I was younger and this is the choice that I am going to give her. I am not going to accept her not working, it would disappoint me if she was not to study not to work and do nothing. In this country education pays off…I think so, if I did here what I did in Poland I would have much better prospects and that is why I want to push Ania a little bit…ha ha a little bit (laughs)

[79] Private supplementary fee-paying school for primary school children

> and I don't want to regret anything…to give her, to push her and try my best and if it fails at least I tried (Bogna, 3, bookshop assistant/waitress, B, 1st int.).
>
> I just hope they all will want to study and will go to university (Klara, 4, not in paid work, B).

The commitment to the best education possible was also reflected in the mothers' narratives of their endeavours to secure good secondary schools. League tables would be scrutinized, Ofsted reports thoroughly studied and best options searched for:

> To get to this school you don't need to take any exams and pass them well. I was really disappointed because in Poland it is different. Here there is nothing to choose from so I was getting more and more depressed. It is only the private schools that have good results here if you look at the league tables but if you look at Barnet there are at least four state schools with good results. Am I meant to move to Barnet? (Bogna, 3, bookshop assistant/waitress, B, 2nd int.)

Also, mentioned on several occasions, involvement of children in extracurricular activities, despite low income, for the sake of better prospects of secondary education was a common practice. It involved sacrifice: 'I am tired because I have to work, I am tired because I have to study and because I also need to make sure she does well at school' (Bogna, 3, bookshop assistant/waitress, B) but mothers took pride in offering those chances to their children:

> She doesn't go out a lot as she has plenty of activities, she plays the piano, she is in a drama school, she sings in a choir. Now I am trying to move all the activities to the weekdays and send her to Polish school (Bogna, 3, bookshop assistant/waitress, B, 1st int.).

I have earlier discussed Van Zanten's (2005) thesis that it is migrants who reap the fruit of comprehensivisation (equal access to the same educational quality and obtaining comparable results). Migrants are open to believe in and take advantage of offered opportunities and see the educational field as a plausible space in which to compete and advance their social position. One of the mothers in this study conceptually grasps the idea of Bourdieu's 'open door' (1990) by asserting that 'everyone could study, peasant or not peasant, the poorer you were easier it was' (Lidia, 4, university lecturer, B, 2nd int.). In communist Poland, at least in theory, gates of opportunities were left open to anyone. The cultural capital of the images of 'open doors' and, though meritocratic, opportunities constituted within it, was formed in the mothers' formative years. It represents a Polish model of meritocracy for them:

> I believe that if a child is gifted it will always excel, even in a weak school. I dare to claim that by looking at the examples of my husband and myself; we both come from tiny villages and were the first individuals in our families to enter universities attending probably average schools and deprived of fancy extracurricular activities etc. (Polish Internet forum, participant).[80]

It is only in the course of time, while living in the UK, that economic and social barriers may produce disenchantment and the realisation that unlimited prospects are not as wide open as someone imbued with communist ideologies might think. Both of the mothers below have seen the gates closing when the interviews for their children's potential private schools required a covert insider's knowledge, economic resources and parental capital which they could not provide their children with:

> We tried to place Nela in a private school which in fact doesn't have such great results but is more expensive than other private schools and Nela got to the interview stage and the guy asked if she likes skiing and she said she was going skiing in Poland so the guy ridiculed her and said *I have never heard about anyone skiing in Poland, I have heard about the Alps*. So when we heard it at home, we had a clear idea of what they were trying to find out in this school, what background she was from and whether she would be paying the fees. They offered her some discount but not enough for us to pay (Alicja, 3, admin work, B, 2nd int.).

> When he [Arek] went to an exam to a private school they tested him so thoroughly, they tested his knowledge, asked how well he did in sports day, asked for his interests, his hobbies and even plans for the future! They pulled out everything from the children. He got a place in this school but not a scholarship (Mariola, 4, not in paid work, B, 2nd int.).

Geographical mobility involves risk, hesitations and coping with insecurities but also, potentially highly rewarding new opportunities. Poles who took the decision to migrate must have had hopes of advantages and merits to be gained by taking the risk. As explicated earlier, those individuals who decide to leave the comfort of familiar spaces are naturally oriented towards success and social-mobility. The interviewed mothers all had high hopes for their children and undertook, within their remits, strategies, which could potentially secure entering more desirable and rewarding spaces. In the first quotation Mariola demonstrates that against dispiriting pressures of the surroundings, she has persevered in her aspirations and helped to secure a place in a selective grammar school for her son. Julia (4, project assistant, C), in turn, without

[80] Cited with permission

reservations teaches her daughter to be individualistically and egoistically-minded in the educational arena.

> Arek got to a grammar school, he had quite a lot of help from the school in terms of hints what parents could do with children to help them academically, what tests to do, what the entrance exam is like, etc.. For half a year he had extra tuition but they were all telling us it was too late (Mariola, 4, not in paid work, B, second interview).

> In the beginning she [Daria] was very rebellious and was saying why should she be doing anything if this doesn't come from school but we spent a lot of time with John explaining to her that this was her future that the exam results may have a serious effect on her future and not withstanding what the school demands she needed to think egoistically only about herself and her future. It seems that we got through to her and she accepted it (Julia, 4, project assistant, C).

From such a perspective, Polish migrants make the perfect agents for operating in a society where insecurity, ambivalence and endangerment prevail (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). It is, in fact, this precariousness and risk awareness, which in many cases gives rise to adaptability and compels them to harvest all that they need for an acceptable future or simply for survival.

Research has shown that in Poland, household income does not have a significant correlation with the children's educational prospects (Beblo & Lauer, 2004). Therefore, in the context of a transnational move to the UK, education may be obtained at the expense of material well-being, as parents are prepared to pay for educational services which in Poland were provided free, even when it requires economic sacrifices. There were countless examples of this dedication in my study. Sonia (4, catering manager, B) demonstrates her devotion to her daughter's education by explaining how she manages to pay for private tuition for her daughter, who fell behind her peers when she moved to a different school:

> Yes, it is very expensive, London is very expensive and I cannot afford it but it is the future of my child so I have to make sacrifices, I have to make choices. Even if I have to walk to work instead of buying a bus pass of course I will choose Hanna's lessons. I have already done it – it takes me 45 minutes so it is time consuming. I get a lot of help from my parents financially – they pay for her uniform, for her holidays or extracurricular activities (Sonia, 4, catering manager, B).

In the following quote what comes up is first, the amount of emotional capital and of emotional sacrifices (for instance humiliation in this case) which the mother seems to deploy in the education of her children and second, a strong

meritocratic outlook:

> My path to professorship is very jagged; I still have to do so many things, to educate my children, to give them a moral spine and to earn money for their education. I am in an 'academia' teaching and I also do my own research but I also have to do care work to repair our budget. It is such a shame that I have to do such work, work that I have never thought I would have to do but I know that if I didn't do it, we would not survive (Lidia, 4, university lecturer, B, 1st int.).

7.4 Learning to legitimise

> Every reproduction strategy is at the same time a legitimation strategy (Bourdieu, 1986)
>
> But what can one do if one lives here?! (Polish internet forum participant)[81]

Using Lidia's (4, university lecturer, B) example I am attempting to demonstrate the elaborate mechanism of learning to legitimise values, which initially the mothers perceived as unfair and exclusionary. Although Lidia here offers an expressive 'critique' of the social sphere of the educationally and economically privileged, she very eagerly and skilfully secures her daughter's place in this realm of affluence, prestige and status. She makes sure both girls apply to independent schools and the older Rena took an entrance exam to get into Oxford University. In a contradictory manner the mother uses endless strategies to help the daughter win the meritocratic race and inadvertently close herself off from what she perceives as inferior.

First she provides a ferocious rejection of prohibitive measures leading to segregationist outcomes:

> I would never want my children to live in Hampstead and close themselves off among the middle classes. No, I want them to go to Bosnia and see for themselves that there is pain, sweat and blood and that one has to help others and not think that there is a hedge, education and prestige, which separate you from the rest of the world. (..) I am not middle class thank God, not the English middle class, I don't want to live in a suburb, I don't want to have a house with a garden, I don't want to be middle class. I definitely don't want my daughters to change into people with such aspirations. Rena had a boyfriend who was very rich, from a very affluent background, all private schools. She absolutely hated his family,

[81] Cited with permission

> with the healthiest hatred in her heart. She couldn't stand all the façade how they have to always show their wealth, vacations in the Himalayas, diving in the Atlantic Ocean.. (2nd int.).

Yet, she dismisses the value of the comprehensive state education where her daughters were formerly being educated:

> I might move out again and again I will start my search ' Oh my God, where? Ofsted? results... and then I check all the results how splendid they are in Rena's school and then it turns out that her Spanish and French seriously deteriorate. So what is going on there? Where it the truth, where is the guarantee? The only school I haven't tried is a private school, I would love her to go there, maybe it would be different. I was even thinking that maybe I should advertise it in the internet that my daughter is so able, clever and talented and that she cannot realise her potential (2nd int.).

Despite her claims of relaxed values and of becoming more permissive with regard to her children's education, she, possibly inadvertently, happily plays the Bourdieusian game and makes every effort to place them on the top of the social ladder by ensuring that they attend top rank educational institutions:

> I do not see any reason why they should not get into Oxbridge because Rena, even if she doesn't work at all , at all, she is still the best in her school but if she was doing a little bit of work I don't know what she would be getting (2nd int.).

This work should be looked upon as a contribution to demonstrating how the process of legitimization of social reproduction through education is occurring. The tension between migrants perceiving reality through the lens of justice, equality and co-operation (as shown in chapters 5 and 6) and simultaneously acting in a neo-liberal individualistic manner (chapter 7) has been striking. It highlights the process of a gradual learning to accommodate to and legitimize streaming, dividing, and segregating for the sake of having to conform to the existing detrimental societal norm.

In Appendix XIII I present a case study (case study 7 – Lidia), as an example of a process which Polish mothers in the UK may be passing through but which should not be generalizable, based on Lidia's interviews in which she reveals her trauma of transgressive actions in an encounter with alien modes of interaction and a different scale of values from her own. Lidia's narrative is an

incessant negotiation of values, which she is gradually internalising and legitimising. It is almost an internal fight. This mainly touches on strategies used for closing off, competing and winning, individualism and neoliberal values. Those values are often in opposition to the ones, which were promoted in the regime under which the mothers were educated, therefore they are not easily taken for granted by them. Lidia tells how in the past she encouraged her daughters to compete for the best educational opportunities they could get:

> Formerly we were talking a lot about which school would be the best… me asking all the time '*what do you want to do? Where? You need to start preparing now – media studies or filmmaking? You need to prepare it as early as possible; we have to start building your portfolio'*. I was absolutely obsessed…but now I think I understand that they should just respect others and learn to share with others (2nd int.).

The following is another manifestation of this internal strife:

> And now I can see I have another expense of being educated in the UK – languages. She is already 16 and she doesn't speak any Spanish or French and she has been learning them for the last six years so what is going on there? … but my children are trying to cure me; they say Mama, we are happy, satisfied and healthy, what else do you want? (2nd int.)

Another mother, Vera (4, not in paid work, B), throughout both interviews was constantly using pre-transition Poland as a point of reference and as an idealised space for educating children. The dispirited words of this mother, who earlier in her interview pointed out the detrimental effect of existence of the private educational sector on society (p. 207) provides further evidence for my assertion:

> If I had money I would certainly send my children to a private school, children certainly would learn much more than in the state school and it would be less stressful for them – you know less problematic children, less problematic situation as they also segregate children there. For instance, my friend, who sent her child [to a private school] got to only one school and didn't get into two other schools, I was shocked. In Poland you pay money and anyone can go but not here (Vera, 4, not in paid work, B, 1st int.).

Summary of Chapter Seven

I opened this chapter by demonstrating the initial lack of class self-awareness of Polish mothers. This, as was shown, changes in the course of time, when my participants explore their new social milieu. In this contrasting environment they

(this applies to mainly highly educated mothers in my sample) start to become aware of how different they may be in terms of economic and social capital from the native middle classes but also how dissimilar they may be in terms of education from native little educated groups. I have pointed out that the 'educational' habitus of Polish mothers (regardless of their class) may be compatible with the demands of British schooling and help their children succeed educationally. I have explored the following factors, which are considered here as potentially aiding the process of school integration: lack of class consciousness, whiteness, setting eyes on opportunities and prospects rather than constraints. Further I explored the negotiation of values and practices; specific references to justice, equality and fair distribution made by the participants were unravelled. I gave testimony to demonstrate how the mothers observe inequalities 'in the making' and constantly justify their legitimations with regard to their children's education.

The last two parts were devoted to an analysis of the paradoxically (because in discord with the ideologies in which the respondents were brought up) meritocratic and individualistic outlook among Polish migrant parents regarding the success of their children in the UK. Introducing a certain twist to the story, it examined the tension between the legacy of communism, guiding mothers' conduct in the UK and the highly meritocratic, neoliberal stance that they display when acting with regard to their children's future educational and professional trajectories. This meritocratic and hopeful outlook has also been attributed partly to the bequest of the communist regime. For a short time after arrival, mothers perceive the UK educational system as an accessible and open arena (as it was, albeit only theoretically, conveyed to them in the past) on which they are in a position to compete and win. Moreover, they are not inhibited by the rules of the game, are not familiar with the fields of struggle for power and may not be fully aware of structural constraints, which could preclude their children's successful integration. Further conclusions and implications, based on the analysis of all empirical material, are presented in the next part.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Returning to my argument, I shall recall that in this work I postulated the following contentions. First, I demonstrated how both, individual (primary) and collective (secondary) capital, inadvertently but to their benefit, helps Polish migrants to rewardingly function in educational settings in the UK. Second, I argued that collectively acquired and owned capital (as a legacy of socialisation under a socialist regime) helps Polish migrant mothers' children to thrive educationally regardless of their social background or mothers' educational level. This capital may place them in a privileged position educationally, and potentially professionally, in comparison with some other minority groups. Third, I proposed that operating societal forces in the UK, which unwittingly promote and reinforce educational apartheid, might lead to the marginalisation of the Polish migrant community, even though there is compelling potential, as I demonstrated, to effectively integrate Polish migrants.

Although this thesis engages with broader issues related to migration and education of migrants and it might be tempting to extrapolate from the notion of Polish migrant children doing well in English schools owing to their capital to other migrant groups, it is important to emphasise that this work has been carried out in a Polish community which has its own context, specific historical conditioning and idiosyncratic, unique characteristics. By no means, attempts to generalise and hypothesise about other migrants in the UK, based on this study, can be made.

Post accession geographical mobility of Poles is considered to be the most intensive population flow in contemporary European history. Since May 2004, when Poland joined the EU and the UK opened its labour market to Poles, there have been numerous academic debates on the impact of this new settlement. It has been noted that when families decide, for various reasons, to prolong their stay, rather than treating it as being a short-term solution to problems back home, children's schooling starts to be a major point on their migratory agenda. The growing number of Polish children at British schools was observed when spouses began to join their partners, usually bringing children. Furthermore, this unprecedented flow of migrants had an impact on how effectively the UK schools could cope with the influx of Polish children. It is this phenomenon that

provides the background to this explorative research.

Although there has been a considerable popular interest in the phenomenon of rising numbers of Polish children in British schools, little has been said about the dynamics of interactions between Poles and schooling in the UK in academia. A few existing studies touch upon the aspect of integration of Polish children at British schools (Lopez Rodriguez, 2010; Lopez Rodriguez et al., 2010; Majuk, 2007; Moskal, 2010; ibid., 2014; ibid., 2016; Sales et al., 2008; Sales et al., 2010; Tokarz, 2007). Yet, to the best of my knowledge, no empirical research has been carried out on how their children's schooling is experienced by the parents. In this study I have chosen to look at mothers' perspectives, examining their individual experiences. Structural conditions have significantly influenced the position of Polish parents with respect to their children's education. What is frequently missed in the research are the structural barriers which need to be worked against from the perspective of carers rather than institutions. Furthermore, the parental perspective is an important one as parents will have a major impact on how the trajectories of children will be shaped. Also, the processes of transforming migrant identities and the expanse of emotional burden that it carries has not been researched with respect to Polish migrants. Indeed, schools are paramount spaces of integration into the new country and their cultural norms at times may clash with those socialized at home. This, in turn, will trigger possible identity vexation. Hence, this work is also about social relationships between Poles and the host society, which is an under-researched area. Finally, if, according to media and recent studies Polish children are relatively successful in the schooling arena and if that paves the way to a satisfactory future, it may throw some light on what capital helps that process.

Therefore, this presented study brings a novel dimension to the field of migration and schooling research and fills a gap in knowledge by providing an in-depth, comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon and experience of Polish migrants' interactions with the UK educational field.

The research questions that essentially guided the research focus firstly, on strategies that Polish mothers apply to secure educational success of their children and the role of class in this process. Secondly, they focus on forms of capital that play the major role in this process and thirdly, on the mothers' perceptions of the relationship between their home culture and that of the neighbourhoods and schools of their children and the role of class in those perceptions. I

have attempted to answer these questions in the analytical chapters of the dissertation.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 have an overarching leitmotif, which intersects other examined themes. The fact of the mothers being brought up and schooled under a communist regime and the legacy that it engineers resonates when I explore their relationships with neighbourhood, schooling and wider society. It has been shown that Polish migrant mothers enter the host society with a baggage of normative values formed in their native Poland and that those values differ from what they encounter in their new circumstances. However, they have to accommodate unfamiliar settings with regard to the educational arena of their children. I have documented that the collective capital formed in public spheres of socialisation in Poland has a significant impact on how they approach the educational field in the UK and on how they strategise.

The first analytical chapter, Chapter 5, (*Neighbourhoods, schooling and migrant social awareness*) focuses on the respondents' insights into the dynamics of the interactions between their home culture and the culture of their neighbourhoods in the UK. Theorisation and demarcation of the new settings are performed by the mothers using their past in Poland as a frame of reference for the present. Also, in this part, the accommodation mechanism is demonstrated with close scrutiny of the emotional sacrifices of the mothers and the identity disruptions that accompany the transgression leading to the accommodation of new values and practices. Specificities of liminality, examined in this chapter has been identified as an in-between state which helps to establish new identities

It has been argued that the qualifiers of categorising individuals as belonging to particular social classes were different in the culture from which the participants come and in the one where they operate at present. Hence, this, and the additional marked strong social and economic segregation in the UK, has resulted in a sharp delineation of their belonging, which is intensified by the length of their migration status. In consonance with the results, it appears that the longer the stay in the UK, the higher the level of self-belonging. Therefore, despite the particularly predisposed mindset, featuring the relative lack of social class awareness, which mothers bring with them to the UK, the growing self-awareness process of social sorting is an easily identified feature; within the schooling arena Polish mothers from disconnected choosers quickly transform into selective ones. The markers of belonging, which the participants of this study applied were identified as: level of education, moral attitudes linked to Catholic upbring-

ing, language, employment status or dependence on welfare, physical appearance (including whiteness), food and attitudes to parenting. According to the above framing, the strategy of moving away from or accommodating new ways was undertaken. On the one hand mothers made attempts to cross the geographical and social boundaries of their deprived neighbourhoods but on the other hand they were coming to terms with their new localities and gradually learning to participate in them. The need for finding suitable niches was a significant hallmark of the participants' migratory quest. Summing up, it has been argued in this chapter that in the migratory process of integration multiply identities are formed and that the socio-economic identity as opposed to ethnic usually takes over in this process.

The aim of chapter 6 (*Forms of capital*) was to analyse capital, which influence the mechanism of the process of integration into the educational and social make-up of the UK and of the strategies implemented by the participants of this study. It includes a comprehensive, in depth examination of two forms of capital, individual and collective, as framed in the theoretical underpinnings of the study. Religion and ethnicity are looked at separately due to their more problematic and complex status; at times it would be not be plausible to put them in clear-cut categories of individual or collective capital. It has been discussed that the collective capital has a significant role in and an impact on both, strategies taken up and the negotiations of mother' identities.

The first section of chapter 6, examining individual capital (formed in the private sphere) is focuses predominantly on barriers and constraints rather than opportunities or social advantage. It reveals the mothers' resourcefulness, strategies to overcome deficiencies and counteracting hardship arising from specific individual capital. The second section is devoted to collective capital (formed in the public sphere). It presents parental insights into differences between the Polish educational system and that of the UK and features the emergent conceptualisations and practices, which result from those differences. I have identified the following aspects arising from the shared collective capital of the mothers: differences in the concept of childhood, perspectives on parenting, discipline, class awareness and self-ascription, perceptions of educational policies, limited multicultural identity. The third section looks at how religion and ethnicity affect the mothers' integration and strategies used with respect to their children's upbringing. It has been shown that selective acculturation plays an important role in the form of strategies that the

participants undertake. Hybridisation and biculturalism for their children was a common choice. Section four explores newly formed capital including opportunities, formation of new qualities and transgression as a means to acquire new identities. It shows that the respondents saw migration as climbing both economic and social ladders and perceived UK as a land of opportunities and that they were determined to use these opportunities to assure the best possible start for their children in their new reality. Migration also serves as a tool to generate rich personal capital and potentially broadens individuals' horizons when they have the opportunity to compare and contrast varying approaches and lifestyles. Transgression in this section is described as a learning process producing third quality in the syncretism.

The most discursive chapter 7 (*Class, strategies and trajectories*) concludes the thesis. It focuses on the highly individualistic and meritocratic practices of the mothers which are looked upon as contradictory to their previously exposed baggage of communist socialisation. In this chapter I examined the preceding relative lack of British class awareness and the transformations in class consciousness, which significantly articulated and informed the mothers' unfolding outlook and the strategies with regard to social circles, their localities and the children's educational trajectories. I demonstrate how the respondents approach what they see as socio-economic and educational segregation, and how they simultaneously and incessantly substantiate the naturalisation and legitimisation of their actions. The meritocratic outlook is, it is concluded, attributed to the endowment of living under communist ideologies. Back in Poland, mothers were implanted with the notion of equal opportunities for all (open doors, unlimited prospects) and at the same time faced practical structural barriers to access them in the reality of Polish meritocracy. Hence, the new realm of the UK seems to serve as a wake-up call and an outlet of their dormant aspirations. Data presented in this chapter allowed me to draw important conclusions at a more abstract level.

It is vital to again acknowledge the limitations of this study to keep those implications in perspective. Considering the somewhat selective character of my sample, the limitations as to the scope of the study should be acknowledged here. The above analysis and conclusions mostly concern individuals who have decided to settle in London and whose children are predominantly in multicultural schools, both denominational and non-denominational. In this sample only 6 mothers lived outside the boundaries of Greater London (one in Luton, two in

Slough, one in Surrey and two near Manchester). This fact is of great importance as London is a highly cosmopolitan city, which, due to its global character provides foreigners with many opportunities educationally, professionally and for personal development. It also provides a very different background to educational integration from that of a small British town or village, where pupil composition would possibly be less diverse and the mothers would face different challenges. Even from this small sample of six mothers living outside London, idiosyncrasies in their perceptions and perspectives could be identified. Had the study taken place in a small British town, however, the experiences of education in the UK might have been very different as the constraints placed on the individual by structural factors might have been dissimilar. Also, slightly more than half (23 mothers out of 40) were university graduates. Many of the participants in my sample came out as proactive, vocal, opinionated and passionate about education. Possibly, it was a coincidence and with a different set of Polish mothers results would be less determinant and definitive. Within my sample, there was only one family, which could be described as destitute and facing substantial and tangible hardship, yet without doubt such Polish families themselves deserve individual and particular attention. I am aware that there are many such families. They have not surfaced in this work as such.

Notwithstanding the idiosyncratic and profoundly contextual character of the Polish mothers' experiences, the results of this case study of Polish mothers who emigrated to the UK between 1989 and 2005 (with an exception of one) allows for drawing a few important conclusions at a more general level.

First, they perceive the British educational system through the lens of their communist and transitional socialisation and apply this collective capital in dealings with the educational field in the UK. I have focused on several aspects, which I tentatively recognize as the legacy of communism. First, the perceptions of the UK as a strongly classed and polarised, (including educationally), society has been striking among my respondents. It follows that they find it problematic to situate themselves in the complex British class system, often for their benefit. Second, parents tend to unconsciously criticise strategies and policies which inadvertently lead to unequal chances in life, such as, educational streaming, fierce competition between schools, uneven quality or reliance upon parental support which may, explicitly or covertly, fabricate critical discrimination. Related is the ingrained expectation that state education will provide for all citizens equally and unconditionally. In other words, the narrative proclaiming that

schools need to take more responsibility for the children's learning has been prominent in this study. Furthermore, mothers are genuinely concerned about the unpredictability and uncontrollability of their educational planning; the fate of their children's educational accomplishments allegedly seems to be far more precarious in the UK than back home.

Moreover, a feature also attributed to the legacy of communism, is that mothers arrive and initially operate with the collective capital of a specific form of class-consciousness. This limited awareness of rooted British class system determines that class is not perceived as a constraint in social mobility. They consciously and unconsciously situate themselves beyond British class structures (interestingly, this does not prevent them from classifying others via the lens of their own form of class awareness) and as a matter of fact this may help them to aim higher and achieve more than expected of them by their UK hosts. Indeed, contrary to common expectations, Polish parents, not being aware initially of the constraints of class structure and its potential setbacks, tend to follow their own ambitions with regard to the future of their children rather than the paths ascribed to them by the structural conditions of social positioning. This however, does not eliminate hurdles they face and surmount in the process of educational strategizing for their children

Second, UK class positionality as such is significant and determinant among Polish mothers in the context of neighbourhoods and social circles but not to a great extent with regard to the perspectives on the education of children. Following the period of social 'tabula rasa' and of social liminality, it becomes a well-defined marker of belonging. Class is used as a reference for theorising and delineating otherness. Highly educated participants in the sample were far more vocal with regard to social standing influencing their social biases and preferences. Nevertheless, as the results of the study demonstrate, socio-economic class and the level of education have not had a strong interrelation with aspirations and implementation of strategies by parents for the sake of the success of their children. All mothers in the sample, regardless of their socio-economic positioning and levels of education expressed and showed high expectations for their children. Yet, the highly educated ones were more successful in pursuing their high aspirations, usually due to higher individual capital, namely economic, social and cultural.

It has been argued here that mothers, being schooled and ideologically socialised in the communist regime and the transition period of the 1990s, have

actually experienced a limited scope of meritocratically won educational opportunities together with the political narrative of equal opportunities and of working class emancipation. Thereupon, as has been noted earlier, they set their eyes on the myriad of prospects of the new host country. Notwithstanding, I shall reiterate, it was not merely because they have not had the opportunities in Poland but rather because they have been educated into the theoretical elimination of Bourdieu's (1990: 60) 'closed doors, dead ends and limited prospects'. The collective capital of the vision of 'open doors' and opportunities, it was postulated, was acquired in formative years.

Third, even though, in certain senses, the migrants' reception can be riddled with hostility, the analysed collective capital and 'collective educational habitus' (e.g. in the form of parental involvement in the academic sphere, discipline susceptible to control and the ethos of being in employment) predispose them to be competent and intelligent consumers of a complex British 'educational market' and to function successfully in relation to schooling. This unique characteristic, being a certain form of advantageous capital, guards them against all the insecurities of the precarious migrant world and might assure them a comfortable niche in the host society. My aim was to demonstrate how the experiences of Polish migrants actually reflect a distinct scenario from the one which is frequently assigned to migrants and minorities generally, that of a vulnerable and disadvantaged group. I demonstrate capital, which, often inadvertently but expediently, helps Polish migrants fit into the niches, which they consider desirable. Their whiteness is also considered here as constituting this advantageous capital; I have shown that it may act as a privilege drawn from both, the perceptions of society as well as from their own ascriptions of Poles as white and hence gratified and rewarded in the schooling and professional worlds.

Polish migrant families do not necessarily fit into the pattern of class and parental responses and strategies of the UK born and reared families, as has been widely documented in literature (see for example Ball, 2003; Ball, 2003a; Brooker, 2002; Devine, 2004; Johnson, 1999; Power, Edwards, Witty & Wigfall, 2003; Riddell, 2004). Regardless of class, they are equipped with the 'educational' capital (such as supervising, monitoring, overseeing the educational field and feeding aspirations), which again, is the legacy of socialization under a socialist regime in the country of their origin. They draw

unconsciously on the 'right' sort of capital, in line with the government's meritocratic agenda. While this is an apparently stereotypical perception, this 'educational capital', originating from their home country educational practices and ideological narratives, may place them in a privileged position educationally and possibly, in the future, professionally in comparison with some other minority groups and may position them ahead of white British working class pupils. Therefore, I shall tentatively construe that the 'educational' capital of migrant mothers from Poland parallels that of the English middle-classes, notwithstanding my participants' economic situation or their educational or cultural background. As I pointed out earlier, it also fits the institutional requirements, which are placed on them; they are endowed with habitus, which provides them with the feel for the 'game', which in Bourdieu's term symbolizes an educational field in the UK. Further research in this, and related fields, would help provide more data in this area.

Fourth, consequently, this collective 'educational' capital, being a form of expedient capital, will possibly in future protect Polish families and their children from other aspects of precariousness of migrant reality and will secure a comfortable niche in the host society. In other words, education may serve as a means of integration and future success of Polish children in the face of other structural barriers. The weak integration of Polish migrants is frequently highlighted in literature (e.g. Grzymala-Kozlowska, 2005) and explained by their limited language skills that prevent them from full community participation. This is related to the strong ties formed within their national group, which can hinder the flow of novel information. Both are seen as a constraint to social integration and to social cohesion actively sought after by governments. However, it is argued here that a focus on children's academic fulfilment and gratification may in fact prevent working class migrants and those with underprivileged socio-economic backgrounds from potential marginalization and deprivation.

Nevertheless, this argument is not an attempt to draw any fixed conclusions or to predict the future trajectories of Polish migrants or the social strata they will blend into but rather is as an observation of the newcomers' educational efforts and the dynamics of interplay between objective structure and subjective agency (Bourdieu, 1977). In effect, it is an insight into the agents' manoeuvring within the structure, so that it works for them rather than against them. It is as if migrants were able to perform the art of turning predicaments into virtues. Polish

mothers, similar to other groups of migrants, also feared that they lacked the appropriate educational background and had little or no knowledge of the educational system with which to assist their children. This could be established as a transparent lack of cultural capital, the possession of which is vital to be able to succeed in a culturally alien world. Polish mothers also have anxieties and concerns over their lack of control in their children's education or their limited linguistic skills. However again, this insecurity might in fact generate intensified parental engagement and positive 'intensive parenting' (Ball, 2003) leading to the desired results, while carers do all they can to prevent their children from falling behind educationally. This, combined with 'making a virtue out of necessity rather than attempting to achieve what is already denied' (Bourdieu, 1990) and an 'immigrant zeal' (Archer and Francis, 2005) may pave a promising future particularly with regard to the migrants' children.

Fifth, it has been postulated that the propensity for successful integration also occurs through transcending and transforming the original native habitus via the means of selective acculturation and forms of transgression. In this thesis I explored how Polish migrant mothers experience adaptation to British society in relation to their children's education in the UK. The process of formation of new identities in the encounter with schooling and socialisation of their children helped me to unravel this dynamic. Five stages of identity re-construction were identified: (1) initial bewilderment and predominantly innocent/ignorant outlook, (2) rupture of habitus resulting in a sense of liminal existence, (3) proactive social transgressions beyond the mothers' original habitus and internalization of values contrary to their original values, (4) equilibrium and an affirmative attitude to the newly experienced situation, legitimization of practices, (5) 'joining in' following legitimization, consensual validation and a collective commitment to the game formerly rejected.

Sixth, in the mothers' narratives there is a clear tension between being overwhelmed and affected by economic and cultural classism, elitism and stark competition within the educational field and simultaneously participating, without reservations, in the race for educational credentials. It has been asserted that the quest for social advancement and the exploitation of all possibilities for social mobility are strongly on the mothers' agenda. As a result, this study is a showcase for elucidating how legitimization of social sorting through education occurs. It is a gradual learning to internalize and naturalize streaming, dividing

and segregating as a means to integrate and to conform to the prevailing norms and rules in society. Nonetheless, the class policy legitimization and naturalization is being explicitly rejected by the participants.

Hence the message has a warning tone; I reveal the mothers' perceptions of this society as unfair, economically segregated, socially polarised and allowing the intellectually fittest to thrive. They realise that for every winner there is a loser but to their advantage they participate in the 'contest' which serves as evidence that an individual is powerfully moved around by social forces and social structures (namely neoliberal values of capitalism) and is ready to renounce nurtured values which promote equal opportunities and fairer society. Therefore, along those lines, it is the state's responsibility to assure that agents have no scope to abuse the educational field resulting in critical socio-economic discrimination of others.

Finally, reaccentuating the dangers of projecting those results onto other migrant groups, I shall tentatively propose that it would be the detrimental effects of a socially polarised society and of segregation within the educational field which would lead to a potential (and plausible) pauperisation of the Polish community and to its joining the 'rainbow underclass' in the future. In the face of all the structural hurdles, such as the occasional hostile context of reception, the poor access to economic capital, the experienced symbolic violence and veiled social exclusion from desired resources, the Polish mothers whom I researched are not only merely subsisting but also in their own way meaningfully thriving. Their home culture, the collective capital and the habitus formed in the educational context are beneficial in helping them to deal with the pressures of the educational field in the UK and these qualities may anticipate a valuable and fulfilling participation in the new country's institutions and social life. Throughout this work it has been exposed and implied that the indispensable capital is in place, and that there is a solid foundation to integrate the Polish community in the UK so that they both, serve it and are served and rewarded in return.

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Appendix I: Glossary

Capital: assets (taking various forms according to Bourdieu) put to productive use with the ultimate aim of securing advantage and power. Bourdieu refers to the following forms of capital: economic, symbolic, cultural and social.

Class consciousness: awareness of individuals within a particular social class that they share common interests and a common social situation; they may unite and take action (often inadvertently or unconcomitantly) to pursue their shared interests.

Collective capital: belongs to groups rather than individuals and is developed through enculturation within educational experiences. It is conveyed by institutions and formed in a compulsory and collective (public sphere) environment (schooling); due to its obligatory character is difficult to break away or modify by individual factors. Ethnicity within this study also represents collective capital.

Context of reception: the social context that immigrants encounter in the new country, which consists of three levels: (1) the host government's policies toward accepting immigrants; (2) the host society's attitudes, beliefs, stereotypes and prejudices about immigrants and (3) the qualities that the ethnic communities (especially the immigrants' own ethnic group) exhibit when the immigrants arrive.

Cosmopolitanism is an ideology proclaiming that all human ethnic groups belong to a single community based on a shared morality. A person who adheres to the idea is called a cosmopolite.

Cultural capital: forms of knowledge, skill or education; any advantages a person has which give them a higher status in society, including high expectations. Parents provide children with cultural capital, the attitudes and knowledge that make the educational system a comfortable familiar place in which they can succeed easily.

Economic capital: command over economic resources (cash, assets).

Ethnicity: shared by people of common origin or background; here it refers to social, cultural, religious, geographical and linguistic heritage that the participants of this study share.

Field: a social arena in which people manoeuvre and struggle over desirable resources; a system of social positions, structured internally in terms of power

relationships. In this work field of education is understood as all of the structures and stakeholders related to the child's school and education.

Habitus: the person's beliefs and dispositions, which prefigure everything that person may choose to do. It is largely unconscious and includes body movements and postures, as well as the most basic aspects of thought and knowledge about the world. Being the product of social conditioning it links actual behaviour to class structure.

Host culture: the dominant culture that prevails in the given area, here the UK.

Hybridisation: hybridity is a cross between two separate races or cultures and a hybrid is something that is mixed. In this study it denotes an ongoing blending of different cultures.

Individual capital: belongs to individuals rather than groups and is closely linked to private sphere, the individual's family upbringing and setting, such as class, culture and socialisation; it is usually conveyed at home. Gender and partly material status and religious orientation also constitute individual capital.

Internalisation: process of consolidating and embedding one's own beliefs, attitudes, and values when it comes to moral conduct.

Legitimization: here giving green light to ideas and practices which formerly were beyond the normative set of values

Liminality: temporary transitional state of being on a threshold or at the beginning of a process; here it is being betwixt and between (old) home and (new) host culture.

Meritocracy: system where social or economic position is assigned to individuals based upon their 'merits', namely intelligence, credentials, and education. It assumes that individual effort rather than social and cultural background (including race, gender and class), determine one's success and social and economic standing.

Migrant mother: a woman who has children and lives temporarily or permanently in a country where she was not born, and has acquired some significant social ties to this country.

Networks: complex sets of links and relationships that members of a certain community establish in order to form interdependency which assists individuals

to get on with their lives in various capacities: educational, social/emotional, professional or financial.

Segmented assimilation: when various members of an immigrant group follow different paths and participate (assimilate) in different segments of society.

Selective acculturation: when migrant families preserve certain cultural values and practices at the same time engaging in selected mainstream practices of the host society. This practice may not necessarily inhibit participation, but in fact may actually facilitate participation in the new culture.

Social capital: resources based on group membership; relationships, networks of influence and support that individuals can tap into and benefit from by virtue of their social position such as occupation or social connections.

Social integration: movement of a particular group (here Polish migrant mothers) into the mainstream of the host society; it usually means gaining proficiency in a common language of the society, acceptance of its norms and adoption of its common values. It can be used to gain full access to the opportunities, rights and services available within this society and also the feeling of belonging. It is assumed it can be achieved without the elimination of the cultural distinctiveness of ethnic groups.

Social reproduction refers to processes which sustain or perpetuate characteristics of a given social order or tradition over a period of time. In this study I usually refer to social reproduction taking place in educational spaces.

Social transgression: infringement or violation of an existing social norm, transgression is a conscious and deeply reflexive act of denial and affirmation and results in transcending into the 'abnormal', 'awkward' or 'forbidden'.

Spoilt identity: Goffman uses the term to refer to an identity that causes a person to experience stigma; having an attribute that is deeply discrediting. Spoilt identities include racial minority, ethnic minority, sexual orientation, gender, sex, and religious identities, body size, and visible and invisible disabilities.

Stigma: attribute, behaviour, or reputation which is socially discrediting in a particular way; it causes an individual to be classified by others as undesirable and rejected.

Strategies: as used by Bourdieu to denote choices allowing disadvantaged individuals to break out of the expectations that the host society holds of them.

Symbolic capital: accumulated prestige, honour; entails cultural and social capital.

Appendix II: Interview Schedule

Interview questions - migrant

Factual information about the family (who, where from, languages spoken, partner, who they live with, children's ages, mother's age, what kind of schools the children attend)

Parent educational/ professional history
Paid work
What is work for you?
Importance of paid work
Current status

Moving forces
Why?
How long for?

First experiences
Beginnings
Finding school / enrolling
Surprises / problems

Attitudes towards child's school
Why this school?
Good or bad things about it
Curriculum
Academic level / social and emotional support
Child's achievement
Teachers/ teaching assistants
Differences

Expectations with regard to children's education
Preconceptions about an English school
Preconceptions about the kids, the teachers, the relationships
Friends at school

Ideologies/values

Private schooling

Family routines
Origins of friends
Meeting friends
Spending free time with children
Weekends
Cultural activities
Importance of above engagements

Extra-curricular activities and practicalities
Childcare
After school activities/time
Extra-curricular activities - aspirations and barriers

Parental involvement
Child's education
Forms of involvement in school
Difficulties
Child's school achievement / success

Communication with school

Future /aspirations
Expectations about their children's future
Professional / vocational work
Secondary school
Criteria for success

Barriers
Problems at school
Coping with problems
Barriers which are difficult to overcome for them/their child
At the moment - does it all go where they want it to go?
Fears about the educational future of their children

The meaning of education
Importance of schooling and education
An ideal school for your child
Values to transmit to / teach their children
Bad behaviour
Last thing they would like their child to become/turn to

Past educational experiences - impact
Schools
Importance of education / schooling in family
Parents / carers' support for education
Mothers' support for their children
Differences between the mothers' and their children's education

Social self-identification
Self-classification
Perception of class system in the UK
Comparisons and contrasting self with others
The area where you live
Neighbourhood

Perception of the other
English parents - perceptions
Friendships and interactions with English parents
Other minorities
Class classifications of the 'other'
Sympathies / antipathies

Spiritual education
Religion / spirituality
Church
Religion and schools

Cost and benefits for children's education
Benefits / costs of migrating for children

National/cultural identity
Maintaining the identity, language, culture - strategies / motives

Appendix III: List of Interviewed Mothers

List of interviewed mothers

In case of several participants only a general description of place of residence is provided in order to preserve their anonymity. Where two interviews took place, the first interview's place of residence is provided.

Mother	Place of residence	Child(ren) Name/Age	Time of Arrival
Lidia	S-E London	Mila 12/16 Rena 14/18	B
Urszula	Cricklewood	Alek 11/13	B
Mariola	Bromley	Arek 8/11 Tina1,5/4,5	B
Alina	North London	Marek 8/10	B
Ada	Crystal Palace	Adam 4/7 Franek 0/2	C
Alicja	Battersea	Nela 10/13	B
Vera	Central London	Viva 6/8 Giza 8,5/10,5 Mika 1,5/3,5	B
Nina	Crouch End	Tomek 7/10	A
Bogna	Central London	Ania 8/11	B
Renata	Lewisham	Romek 5/7	C
Anna	Walthamstow	Ala 7/9 Pola 8/10 Eloi 0/2,5	B
Edyta	Central London	Vika 2 Gala 10	C
Ida	Slough	Antek 9	C
Ola	Archway	Pawel 9	B
Lila	Luton	Darek 7 Maja 2	C
Nora	Chiswick	Kalina 8	B
Julia	Blackheath	Daria 14	C
Aniela	Central London	Roma 11 Irek 8 Remek 5	B
Dorota	Manchester	Sara 11 Inga 14	C
Halina	Manchester	Jacek 4 Teodor 7	C

Irena	Croydon	Pola 6	C
Justyna	Slough	Michal 9 Agata 11	C
Klara	Leyton	Oliver 1,5 Hugo 1,5 Wala 6	B
Kamila	Wood Green	Zuza 7	B
Maria	Greenford	Mirek 1,5 Leszek 3 Witek 5	C
Olga	Central London	Wanda 3 Ela 5	C
Roza	Acton	Jola 9	C
Zofia	Acton	Rafal 6 Sasza 9	C
Wanda	Acton	Sylwia 10	C
Weronika	Acton	Beata 0 Basia 10	C
Mina	Streatham	Gabriel 7	C
Karina	Kent	Edek 8 Lara 7	B
Eliza	Lewisham	Helga 1,5 Bolek 9	C
Emilia	Lewisham	Andrzej 7	C
Danuta	Acton	Sebastian 3.5 Radek 6 Waldek 9 Antonia 2 mth Magda 15	C
Sylvia	Acton	Piotr 7 Iwona 9	B
Natalia	Central London	Ilona 7	B
Agata	Acton	Victoria 8	C
Greta	Central London	Milosz 5 Jacek 9	B
Sonia	Kilburn	Hanna 7	B

Appendix IV: Tables with Information about Participants

Mother	Child(ren) Name/Age	Place of residence	Type of school attended by children	Since when in the UK	Motives for coming to UK	Relationship status /Partner's origin
Lidia	Mila 12/16 Rena 14/18	SE London	Grammar Secondary RC Secondary	2000	work	single mother / arrived in the UK alone
Urszula	Alek 11/13	Crickewood	RC Primary	2004	joined partner	lives with Polish partner
Mariola	Arek 8/11 Tina 1.5/4.5	Bromley	CofE Primary	1999	came with partner who came to work	lives with Polish partner
Alina	Marek 8/10	North London	RC Primary	1996	holidays/ casual work	lives with partner - Ireland
Ada	Adam 4/7 Franek 0/2	Cristal Palace	Non-denom. Primary	2005	joined partner	lives with Polish partner
Alicja	Nela 10/13	Battersea	RC Primary	before 2000	holidays/ learn English / casual work	lives with partner - Spain
Vera	Viva 6/8 Giza 8.5/10.5 Mika 1.5/3.5	Central London	RC Primary	before 2004	casual work and overstayed	lives with partner – African origin
Nina	Tomek 7/10	Crouch End	Non-denom. Primary	1982	overstayed due to introduction of Marshall Law in Poland	lives with partner - UK (Middle East origin)
Bogna	Ania 8/11	Central London	RC Primary	before 2000	holidays casual work	single mother - separated from her English partner
Renata	Romek 5/7	Lewisham	Non-denom. Primary	after 2004	joined partner	lives with new Polish partner
Anna	Ala 7/9 Pola 8/10 Eloy 0/2,5	Walhamstow	Non-denom. Primary	before 2004	came for casual work	separated from her ex-partner from Turkey
Edyta	Vika 2 Gala 10	Central London	RC Primary	2007	joined partner	lives with new Polish partner
Ida	Antek 9	Slough	RC Primary	after 2004	followed partner who came to work	lives with Polish partner
Ola	Pawel 9	Archway	CofE Primary	2003	joined partner	lives with new partner from Turkey
Lila	Darek 7 Maja 2	Luton	Non-denom. Primary	after 2004	joined partner	lives with Polish partner
Nora	Kalina 8	Chiswick	CofE Primary	before 2004	not known	lives with Polish partner
Julia	Daria 14	Blackheath	Non- denominational Comp. Secondary	2006	joined partner	lives with new partner from UK (Caribbean origin)
Aniela	Roma 11 Irek 8 Remek 5	Central London	Non-denominational Primary	before 2000	not known	lives with partner - Morocco
Dorota	Sara 11 Inga 14	Manchester	CofE Primary CofE Secondary Comp.	after 2004	work	lives with new Polish partner
Halina	Jacek 4 Teodor 7	Manchester	CofE Primary	after 2004	work	lives with Polish partner

Mother	Child(ren) Name/Age	Place of residence	Type of school attended by children	Since when in the UK	Motives for coming to UK	Relationship status /Partner's origin
Irena	Pola 6	Croydon	Non-denom. Primary	2006	joined partner	living with partner - Polish
Justyna	Michal 9 Agata 11	Slough	RC Primary	2005	joined partner	living with new partner - Polish
Klara	Oliver 1,5 Hugo 1,5 Wala 6	Leyton	Non-denom. Primary	2002	joined partner who came three months earlier	living with partner - Polish
Kamila	Zuza 7	Wood Green	RC Primary	2002	joined partner who came one year earlier	living with partner - Polish
Maria	Mirek 1,5 Leszek 3 Witek 5	Greenford	Non-denom. Primary	2005	joined partner who came nine months earlier	living with partner - Polish
Olga	Wanda 3 Ela 5	Central London	RC Primary	after 2004	joined partner	living with partner - Polish
Roza	Jola 9	Acton	Non-denom. Primary	2006	joined partner	living with partner - Polish
Zofia	Rafal 6 Sasza 9	Acton	Non-denom. Primary	2005	joined partner	living with partner - Polish
Wanda	Sylwia 10	Acton	Non-denom. Primary	after 2004	joined partner	living with partner - Polish
Werotika	Beata 0 Basia 10	Acton	Non-denom. Primary	after 2004	joined partner	living with partner - Polish
Mina	Gabriel 7	Stretham	Non-denom. Primary	2005	joined partner	living with partner - Polish
Karina	Edek 8 Lara 7	Surrey	RC Primary	1999	came for holidays and to learn English	living with partner - African origin
Eliza	Helga 1 Bolek 9	Lewisham	Non-denom. Primary	after 2004	joined partner	living with partner- Polish
Emilia	Andrzej 7	Lewisham	Non-denom. Primary	after 2004	joined partner	living with partner- Polish
Danuta	Sebastian 3.5 Radek 6 Waldek 9 Antonia 0 Magda 15	Acton	Non-denom. Primary Comprehensive Secondary	after 2004	joined partner	living with partner- Polish
Sylvia	Piotr 7 Iwona 9	Acton	Non-denom. Primary	2004	joined partner	living with partner- Polish
Natalia	Ilona 7	Central London	CofE	late 90s	holiday work English course	living with partner- Moroccan
Agata	Victoria 8	Acton	Non-denom. Primary	2005	joined partner	living with partner- Polish
Greta	Milosz 5 Jacek 9	Central London	RC Primary	1996	came with her partner to study	living with partner- English
Sonia	Hanna 7	Kilburn	CofE	1998	came to do casual work	living with new partner - Polish

Mother	Languages used at home	Maternal Education	Work status / profession in UK	Housing / Neighbourhood	Social Circles
Lidia	Polish /English (mixing)	PhD (Poland)	Senior University Lecturer	Rents a 2bed flat in a deprived neighbourhood	multicultural via activism, work, schools
Urszula	Polish	Post A-level (college)(Poland)	Pub work/ waitress	Rents small 1 bed conversion in high street in a residential area	Polish mainly, lacking time to socialise
Mariola	Polish	MA Marketing (Poland)	not working	Owns 4 bed semi- detached house in an affluent residential area	Polish, some multicultural via partner's work
Alina	English/ Polish	PhD (UK)	Work-based doctoral program in psychology	Council tenant - 2 bed flat on a large estate	Polish mainly, other via work but distant friendship
Ada	Polish	MA Sociology (PhD started but not completed) (Poland)	not working	Rents a room in a house in north London with other Polish migrants	Polish, very few other
Alicja	English/ Spanish	BA Environmental Studies (UK)	administrative work	Housing association tenant - rents a 3 bed flat between two very economically polarised areas	multicultural, via work, non-Polish partner and school
Vera	English/ Polish / French	MA Geography (Poland)	not working	Council tenant - rents a 2 bed flat in a tower-block on a large estate planned to be demolished	mixed; Polish but some other through partner, school and swim club
Nina	English	MA Chemistry (Poland)	Systems analyst - currently not working	Owns large semi-detached house in a middle class area of north London	predominantly multicultural, mostly neighbourhood and school, very few Polish
Bogna	English/Polish (mixing)	BA English Teaching (Poland)	bookshop assistant/ café assistant	Council tenant - lives in a 2 bed flat in a block in a gentrified multicultural area of central London	ex-partner's family, mother's family, mixed - Polish and other
Renata	Polish	post A-level (college)(Poland)	not working	Rents a 2bed flat - outskirts of South London	Polish mainly
Anna	Polish/English (mixing)	vocational school - secretarial (Poland)	not working/ casual cleaning jobs	Council tenant in temporary accommodation - outskirts of North London	mostly Polish and east-european, new boyfriend British
Edyta	Polish	Management Studies - BA (Poland)	project assistant in a governmental agency	Rents ex-council 2bed flat in one of most deprived areas of London	few friends, mostly acquaintances via work and school
Ida	Polish	MA Journalism/ Telecommunication Studies (PL)	not working	Rents 2 bed house - to be demolished	Polish via school
Ola	Polish/ English	Starting Dental Technician Course (UK)	not working	Rents ex-council 2bed flat in disadvantaged area	multicultural via her college course
Lila	Polish	BA Tourism / Started MA but has not completed (Poland)	not working	Rents flat in a small private estate of houses in Luton	Polish, efforts to socialise with other school parents
Nora	Polish	A-levels (Poland)	café shop owner/manager	Rents a 2bed flat in Chiswick	multicultural via business, school
Julia	Polish/ English	MA (Poland)	project assistant in a private company	Recently bought a flat in Blackheath	still few friends
Aniela	Polish/ English/ Arabic	MA (Poland)	not working/ some voluntary work	Council tenant - 2 bed flat in Holloway	multicultural via school, Polish via Polish school
Dorota	Polish	Medical Doctor	Medical doctor	Rents a large house in affluent neighbourhood, plans to buy	multicultural but regularly meeting group of Polish friends
Halina	Polish	Medical Doctor	Medical doctor	Rents a large house in affluent neighbourhood, plans to buy	multicultural but regularly meeting group of Polish friends

Mother		Languages raised at home	Maternal Education	Work status / profession in UK	Housing / Neighbourhood	Social Circles
Irena		Polish	A-levels	not working	2 bed flat on estate; rented on private market	Hasn't developed friendships yet
Justyna		Polish	Vocational school	not working	renting a room in a house with other Polish families	Polish mothers at children's school, few friends
Klara		Polish	MA	not working	renting a small 2bed house in Leyton	multicultural, some English friends
Kamila		Polish	MA	not working	2 bed flat on estate; rented on private market	Polish networks only
Maria		Polish	A-levels	not working	2 bed flat on estate; rented on private market	Polish networks mainly, a few multicultural
Olga		Polish	Vocational school	not working	1bed flat on large estate due to be demolished (on private market)	Polish and East-european mainly
Rona		Polish	A-levels	not working	1 bed flat in transitional, non-residential zone	Polish only, still few friends
Zofia		Polish	A-levels	not working	2bed flat on private market	Polish and some multicultural via partner and college
Wanda		Polish	Vocational school	not working	1 bed flat in non-residential deprived neighbourhood	Polish mainly, some multicultural via college
Weronika		Polish	Vocational school	works at home as hairdresser	rents 2 rooms in a shared house, shared kitchen	Polish only
Mina		Polish	A-levels	works in a pub, cleaning jobs	rents 2 rooms in a shared house, shared kitchen	multicultural via work, mainly Polish
Karina		English	MA	not working	renting large house in an affluent area in Surrey	multicultural, few friends, spends time mostly among family
Ewa		Polish	A-levels	not working	renting a 2 bed flat in residential area	Polish mainly via children's school
Emilia		Polish	MA/LLaw	not working	not known	Polish mainly, still few networks
Dorota		Polish	A-levels	works from home	rents a flat in a conversion, residential area	Polish mainly via children's school
Sylwia		Polish	MA	not working	rents a flat on private market	Polish and multicultural, speaks good English
Natalia		English/Polish	BA	works in her profession (financial sector)	rents a 1bed flat from a council	multicultural via partner, work and child's school
Agata		Polish	A-levels	not working	rents a 2bed flat on private market	Polish mainly
Greta		English/Polish	MA	not working, works in occupation close to her qualifications	rents a 2bed flat on an estate, gentrified area	multicultural via partner, work and child's school
Sonia		Polish	MA	works as catering manager	rents 1bed flat from council, due to be demolished	multicultural via work, family and child's school

Appendix V: Tables with Information about Panel Participants (Transformations)

Name/ when arrived	Education	Relation Status at 2nd interview	Date of Interview		Ages of children/School year attended		Schools attended		Mother's activity at time of interview		Residence Area and accommodation type	
			1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd
Lidia	PhD, currently senior lecturer	Living with a partner (not the biological father of her children)	July 2006	2009	Mila 12 (Y7) Rena 16 (Y11)	14 (Y9) 18 (sixth form)	Grammar school Grammar School	Grammar School 'Top'* grammar school	Academic lecturer	Senior lecturer	Rented accommodation in multicultural area of East London	Owned accommodation in S-W London (small 3bed flat above shop premises)
*Of the *147* leavers in *2006*, *146* proceeded directly into Higher Education - mostly at top universities - or intend to apply after a gap year. Twenty gained places at Oxford or Cambridge (over 150 have gained entry in the last ten years) Significant numbers went on to degree courses in engineering, law and medicine. The mother bought a flat above a shop in the outskirts of S-W London. The older daughter moved for the Sixth Form to a 'top' grammar school with 300 candidates for 50 external places in the Sixth Form, in the top 10 schools in the country at an A level (school's own profile). Being a divorced (from a Polish husband) single mother at the first interview (this is how she called herself), two years later she was living with her long-term English partner. He older daughter applied to study at Oxford University but not getting a place there, now is planning to study at a different, well regarded University.											
Urszula	Post A-level College (Administration)	Married to a Pole	2007	2009	Alek 11 (Y6)	Alek 13 (Y8)	Local RC Primary school	RC Secondary School for Boys	Work in pub	Work in College Library (where Urszula did her English language courses)	Rented, small 2 bed flat above shops in High street of North London	Rented, larger 2 bed flat in a residential area of North London (closer to son's new school)
Urszula joined her husband with her son who came to the UK without any knowledge of English, now Alek is in a Roman Catholic boys school in the borough where he only got to after the mother's appeal and the primary school's headteacher intervention. They are all very satisfied with Alek's school. The mother while doing English courses in a further education college was asked to apply for a job in the college's library, which she took up shortly after the second interview. They have moved to a larger house in a residential area closer to Alek's school.												

Mariola	Degree in marketing, in Poland worked in marketing	Married to a Pole	2006	2009	Arek 8 (Y3) Tina 1.5	Arek 11 (Y6/Y7) Tina 4 (going into Reception Class)	Arek (CofE.) faith school	Arek Obtained place in 'top' grammar school Tina goes to faith school (Cof E)	Looking after children, says she cannot work not speaking sufficient English	Looking after children	Owned 4 bed semi- detached house in an affluent residential area of South London, next to LEA'S best performing primary school	Living in the same accommodation as at the 1st interview
Mariola is still looking after her children and staying at home, Arek obtained a place in a leading grammar school in the country where ' there were 700 applications for 112 Year 7 places' (school's own profile), her husband works in the same company as before and they live in the same house as 3 years earlier. In a few months Tina will enter Arek's previous primary school. The school is in the top 5% of schools across the country on the measure of SAT results.												
Alina	Doctorate in Psychology, works as a clinical psychologist	Married to an Irish	2007	2009	Marek 8(Y4)	Marek 10 (Y6) Alina pregnant with Stan	Marek Catholic Primary School (1st place in league tables for LEA)	Marek Catholic Primary School, preparing for selective secondary schools	On a work-based doctoral program	Full-time job as clinical psychologist	Renting 2 bed flat on a large council estate	The same 2 bed flat but bought from the council
Alina during our first interview was doing her doctoral degree, Marek attended a local catholic primary school in which he only got a place after the mother's formal appeal as she didn't want Marek to attend a local community school. During the second interview, the mother was very preoccupied about preparation for exams in various selective schools. The family is still living in the same accommodation as two years earlier but they have bought the council flat under the Right to Buy Scheme. Recently she gave birth to Stan and Marek didn't manage to obtain a place in a selective school; he will go to a local comprehensive.												
Ada	Masters Degree in Sociology, worked as a university lecturer in Poland	Married to a Pole	June 2006	2009	Adam 4 (Reception Class) Ada pregnant with Franek	Adam 7 (Y3) Franek 3	Adam Local Primary Community School in North London	Adam Local Primary Community School in South London	Not working , pregnant with Franek	Working part-time as media researcher and working in her small business (art)	Renting a room in a semi detached house in north London with other Polish migrants	Renting a 2 bed flat above business premises in high street in south London (non-residential area)
She moved to south London in search of good schools and was disappointed to find out that the results of the school where she moved Adam doesn't reflect the expected by her quality. Though results (particularly value added) are very good and the school is described by Ofsted as outstanding, Ada is not happy with the neighbourhood and the intake as most children come from families where parents do not work. Ada started to work part time as a media researcher and also set up her own small business. Moved from north London to south London in search of better schools and better neighbourhoods. Ada gave birth to Franek in 2006.												

Vera	Degree in Geography from Poland and Masters in Urban Planning from the UK	Married to an African	2006	2009	Viva 7 Giza 9 Mika 1.5	Viva 10 Giza 12 Mika 4	Viva and Giza; local RC primary school	Viva – the same RC Primary Giza RC secondary school	Not working, looking after Mika	Having finished her Masters Degree, Vera is actively looking for work	Renting a 2 bed flat from a local authority in a tower-block on a large estate; the estate is planned to be demolished in the future	Living in the same flat as at the 1st interview
Vera finished her Masters Degree and was actively seeking employment during her second interview. One of the girls went to a local roman catholic secondary school, which was not a very traumatic issue for Vera as there were two catholic schools with very good results in the proximity of her residence. Both girls practice competitive swimming in a local swimming club for, as the mother put it, 'avoiding going downhill'. She was disappointed at the second interview that it has been decided the tower blocks would not be demolished in the nearest future but rather refurbished.												
Nina	Mastrs in Chemistry from Poland, did qualifications for computer programming	Married to English of Middle East Origin	2005	2008	Tomek 7 (Y2)	Tomek 10 (Y5)	Local community school	As at 1st interview, Tomek will attend a local compr. together with many of his school friends	Works as computer analyst on temping contracts	Temporarily out of work	Owned large semi detached house in a middle class neighbourhood of north London	As at 1st interview
As Tomek has a statement of SEN, Nina claims she has given up on trying to prepare him to a selective school and she is content he will go to a local comprehensive which she considers as acceptable. She has put a lot of emphasis on helping Tomek to develop friendships with children from the neighbourhood who, she claims, come almost exclusively from middle-class affluent families.												
Bogna	Finished College of English in Poland, accountancy courses in the UK	Single mother, divorced from English husband	2005	2008	Ania 8 (Y3)	Ania 11 (Y6)	Local RC Primary	Waiting for results about secondary schools, applying for well regarded RC school at considerable distance from her place of residence	Works as a waitress and in a book shop	Manages accounts and works in the same bookshop where she worked previously	Lives in a 2 bedroom flat in a local authority block in a gentrified, multicultural area of central London	Lives in the same flat but has bought it under RTB scheme
Although Bogna has been very disappointed with her daughter's primary school as the daughter was bullied and the parents of other children were very different in their ethos from her ethos, she kept Ania in this school as she knew it would be easier to obtain a place in a highly sought catholic school for girls in the same borough but at a considerable distance. The mother started going to church regularly when Ania was in Y5 and the child obtained a place in the mother's preferred school. The mother has been promoted in her job after completing required courses.												

Alicia	BA Environmental Studies	Married to a Spanish	2005	2009	Nela 10 (Y5)	Nela 13 (Y9)	Roman Catholic Primary at a considerable distance from their home	RC girls secondary school	Works in a small company (admin); formerly in catering, childcare, as a reception staff	Works in two companies as an office worker	Rents a 3 bedroom flat in a housing association block, between two very economically polarised areas	The same as at 1st interview
Alicia made a lot of effort to make sure her daughter gets a place in an acceptable for her school. They applied for scholarships in several independent schools for Nela and also applied for top catholic schools not in the proximity of their house. Nela got a partial scholarship in an independent school but also obtained a place in a top comprehensive catholic school in the borough (in the light of GCSE results). They accepted a place in the catholic school. Alicia has been changing jobs several times but always worked part-time in order to have time to look after Nela and to take her to various activities such as piano classes or Spanish.													
Anna	Started vocational training after finishing primary school but never finished it (trade school)	Cohabiting with an English partner (father of her recent child)	2006	2009	Ala 7 (Y2) Bola 8 (Y3)	Ala 10 (Y5) Bola 11 (Y6) Eloy 2.5	Community primary school	CofE local village school,	Works in catering (at the same time receives welfare benefits)	Doesn't work, financially supported by her partner	Lives in a temporary accommodation provided by the council in the outskirts of north London	Lives in a semi-detached house with her partner in a village outside north London
Anna has had a few major changes in her life. She formalised her relationship with her English partner. She moved her house (in between interviews she moved house 3 times) and now lives in a rather isolated rural setting outside north London in the house of her partner. She lives in a predominantly white English middle-class area, which she contrasts with the neighbourhood where she has been living before with her Turkish ex-partner. The girls moved to a new village faith school and settled there very well. Anna gave birth to Eloy, who was 2 and half during the second interview. She claims she feels very alienated and severely depressed in the new setting, but she sees it as an opportunity for the girls.												

Appendix VI: Statistical Data on Participants

Statistical data on participants

Here I present basic statistical data (numerical and percentages) of frequencies for my sample in a graphic form for lucidity. All data provided come from the first set of interviews in case of panel interviews. I addressed the following aspects of the sample:

1. Time of mothers' arrival in the UK (pre and post EU accession)
2. Length of stay in the UK
3. Employment status
4. Work profile
5. Ages of children throughout the whole sample
6. Schools attended by children in the sample
7. Place of residence (borough of London)
8. Housing circumstances
9. Relationship status
10. Educational level of mothers

Figure 1. Time of mothers' arrival in the UK (pre and post EU accession)

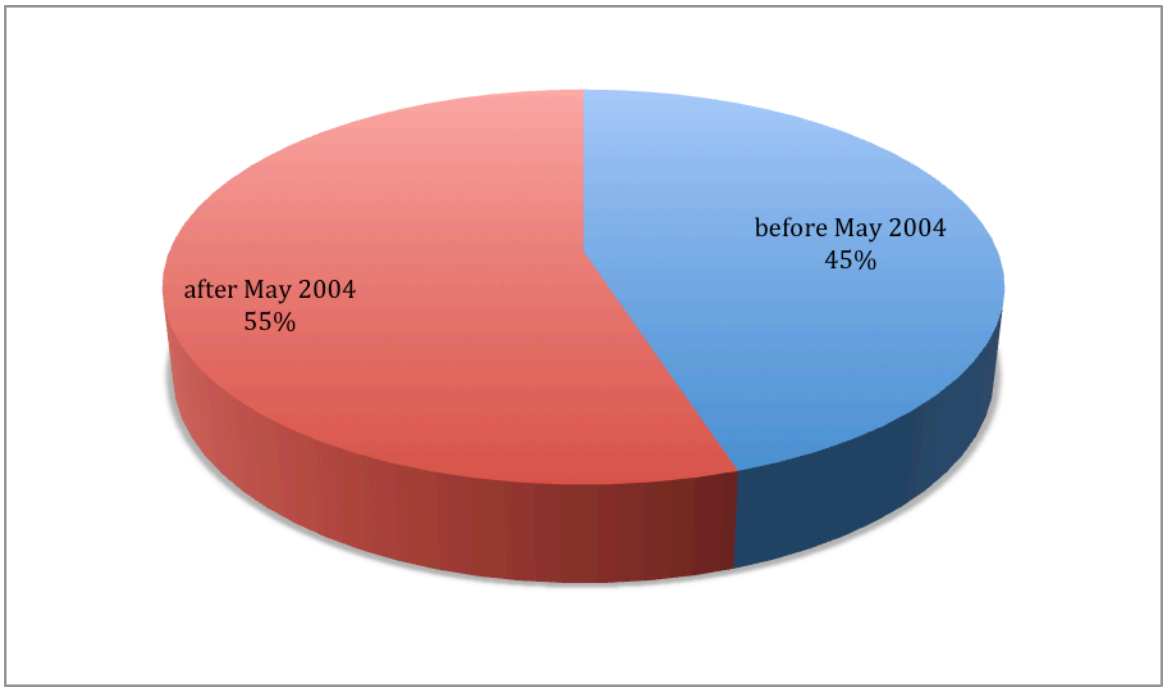


Figure 2. Length of stay in the UK

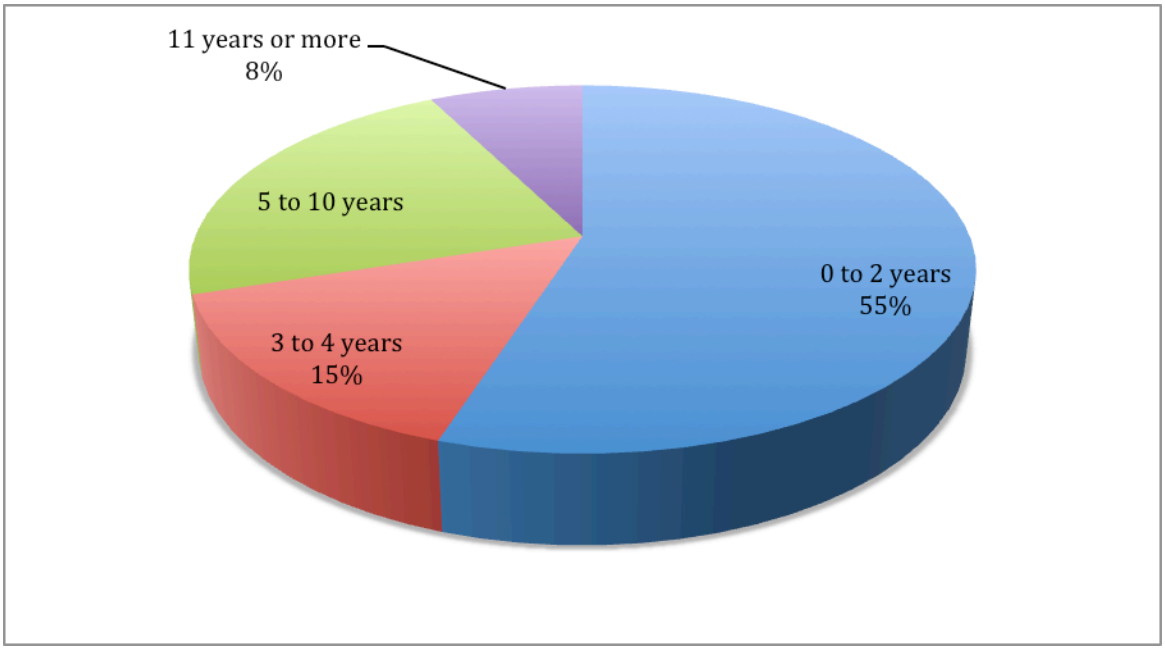


Figure 3. Employment status

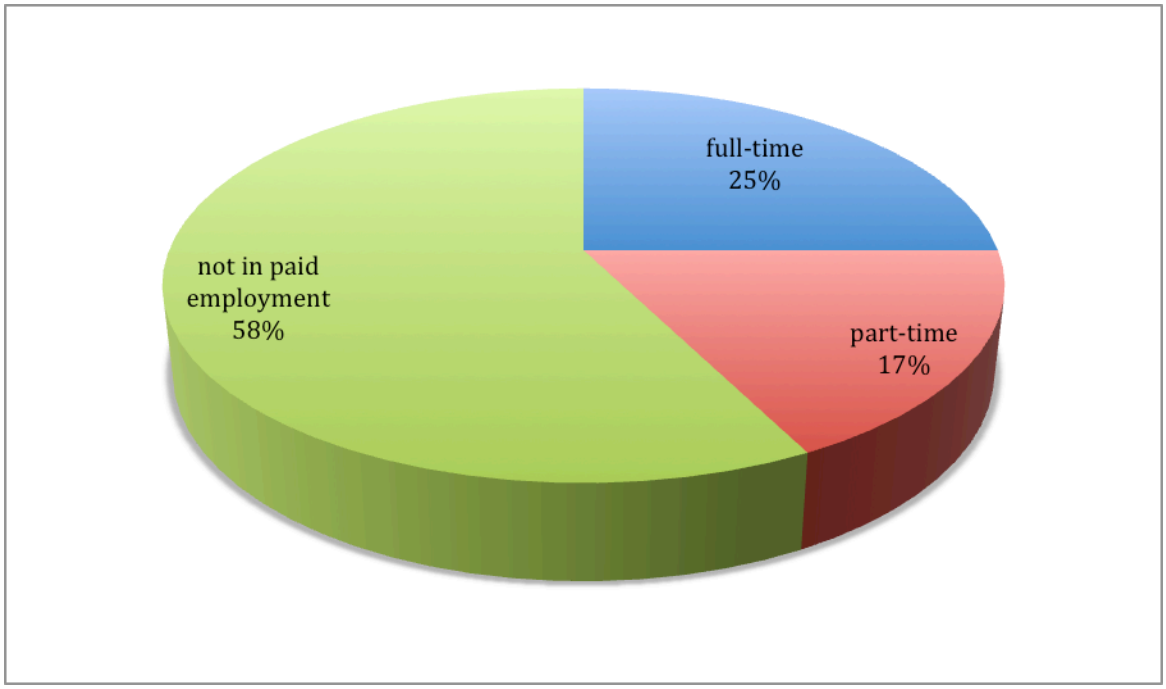


Figure 4. Work profile

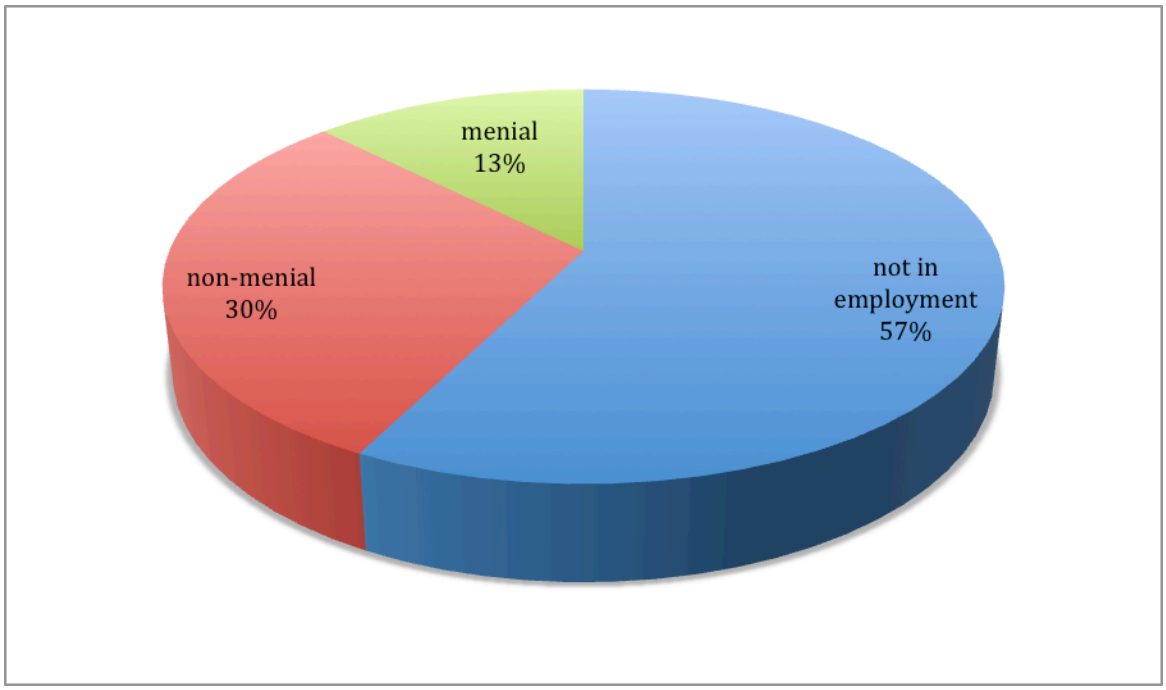


Figure 5. Ages of children throughout the whole sample

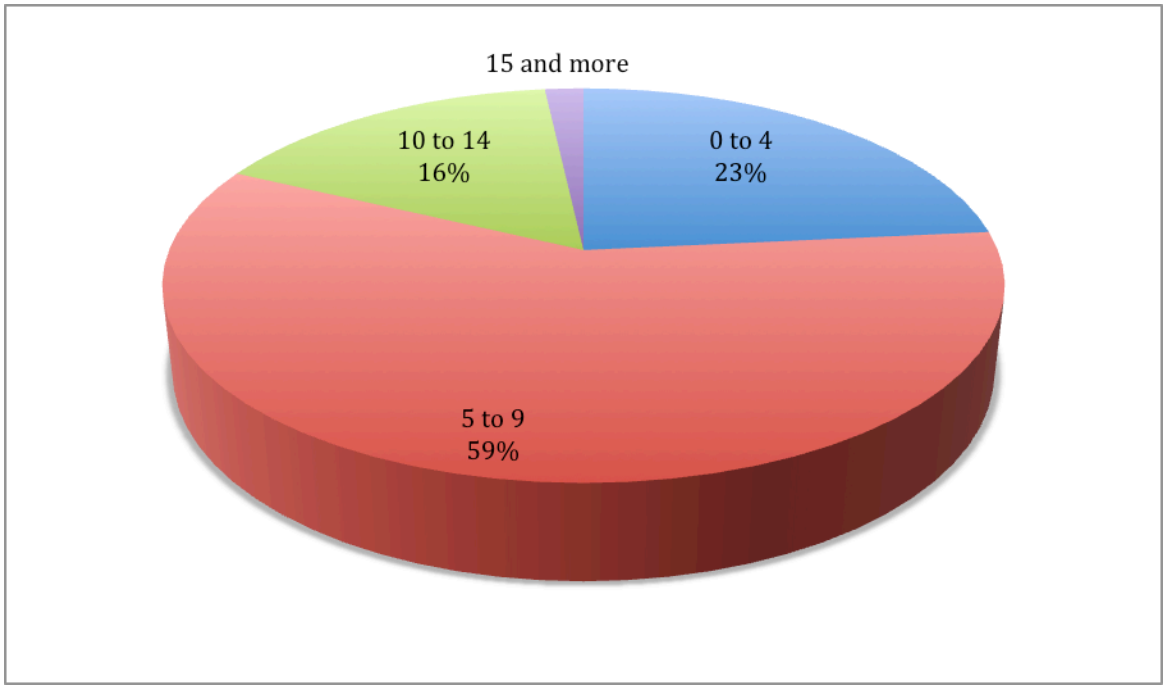


Figure 6. Schools attended by children in the sample

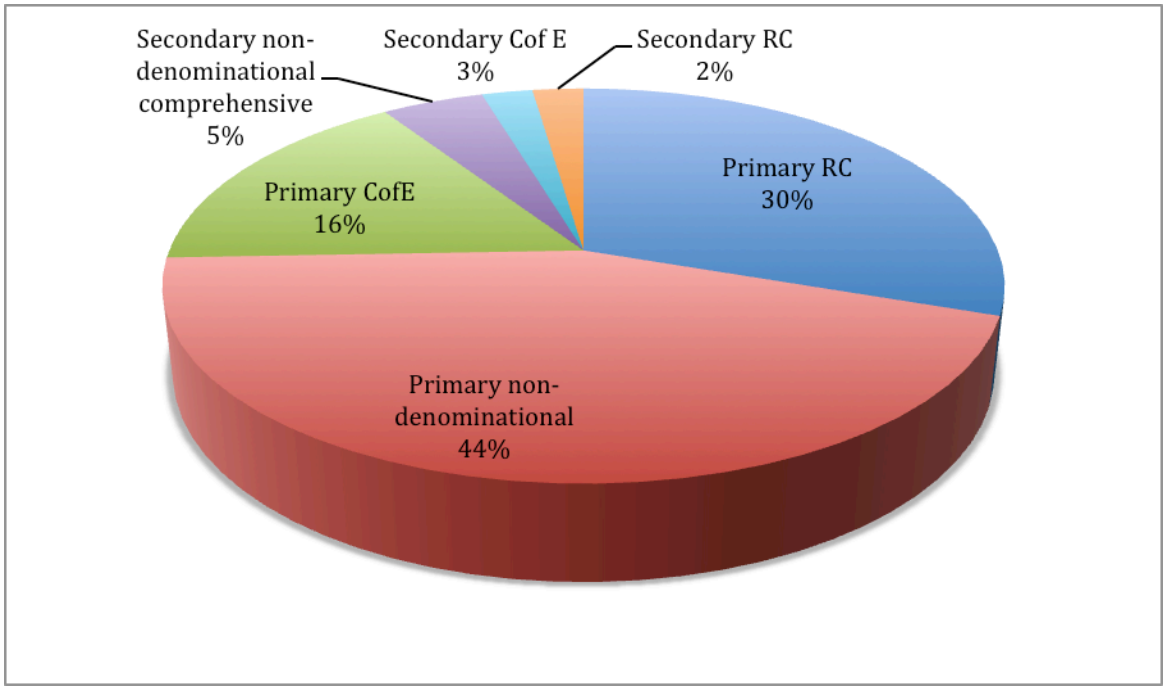


Figure 7. Place of residence (borough of London) – number of participants is provided next to the name of Borough. Remaining 6 mothers lived outside London (Slough (2), Manchester (2), Luton, Kent)

Figure 8. Housing circumstances

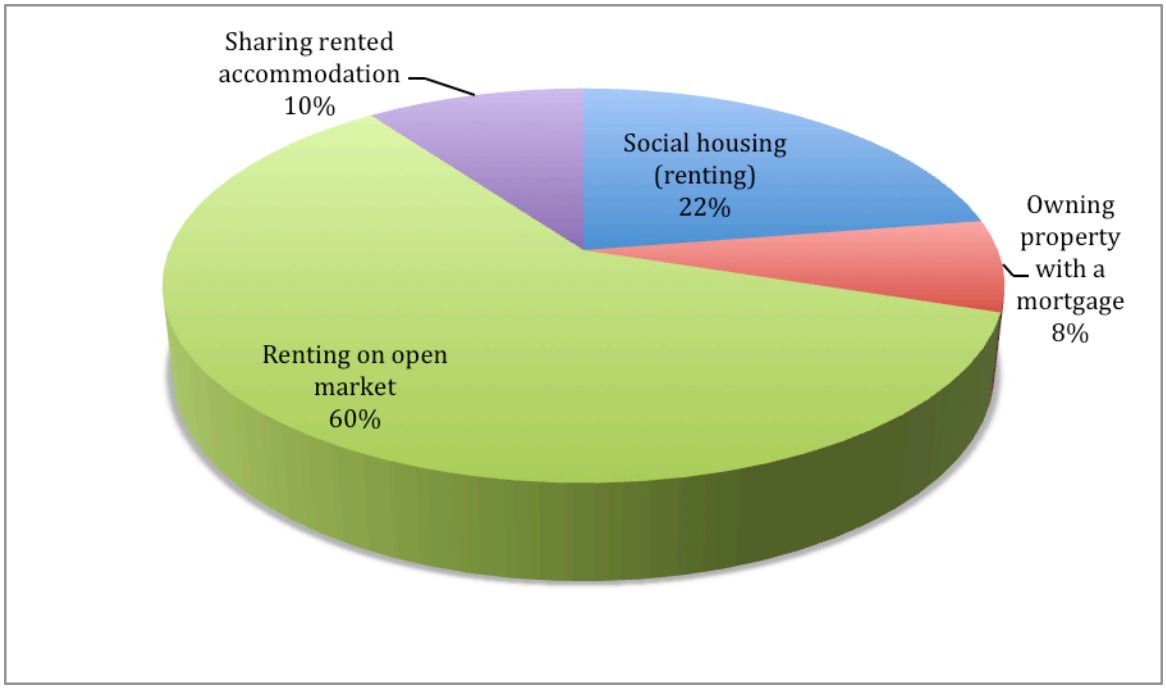


Figure 9. Relationship status

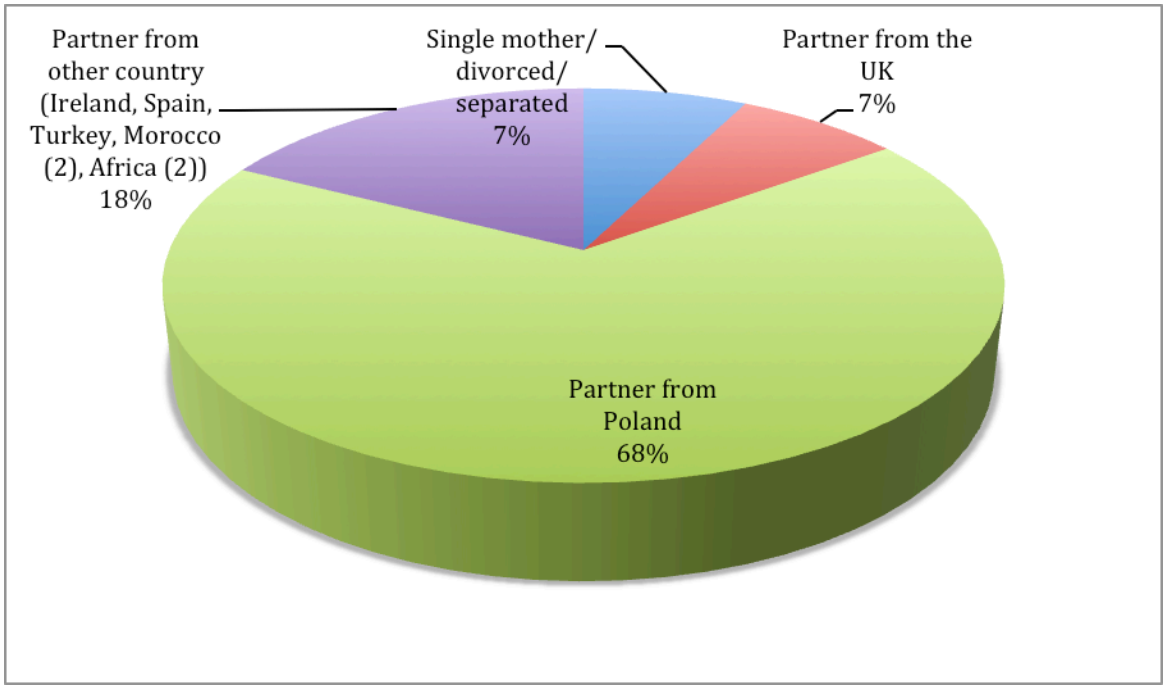
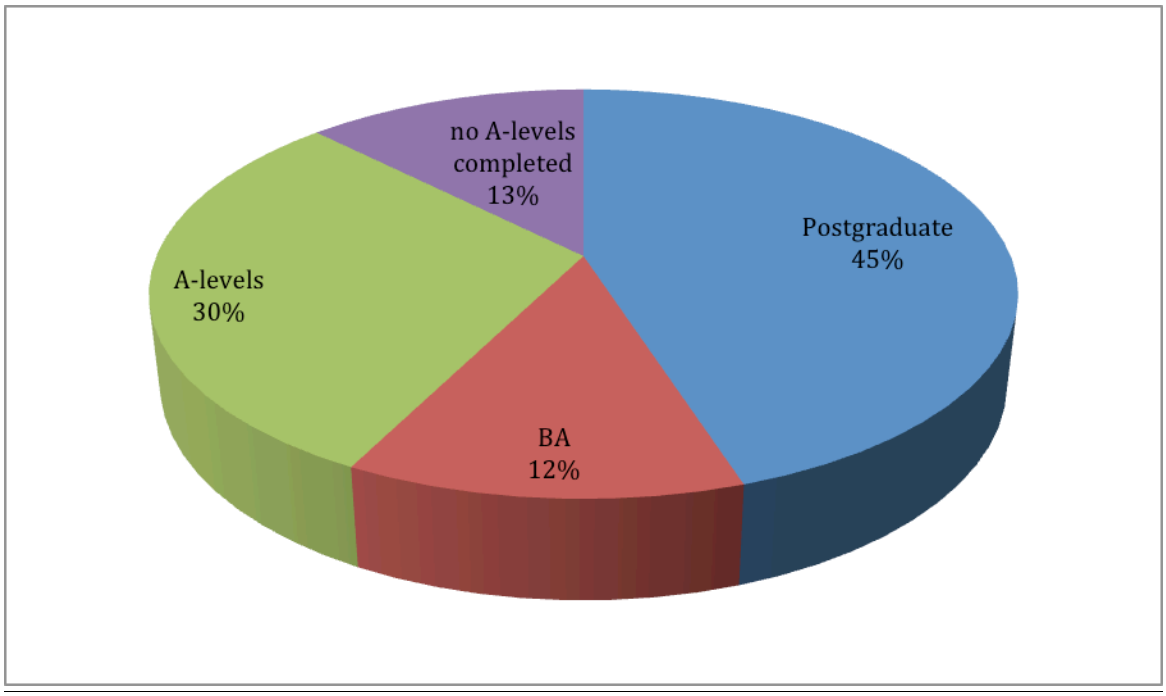


Figure 10. Educational level of mothers



Appendix VII: Introductory Letter to Participants

Letter to participants

March 2006

Dear Participant,

Title: Capital, Identities and Strategies for Success: explorations of the perspectives of Polish migrant mothers on their children's education in the UK.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in my study which will finally be presented as my PhD thesis.

The primary focus of this study is to explore perspectives of Polish mothers on their children's education and schooling in the UK. The topic of migration from East-European countries to the UK after the expansion of the EU on 1 May 2004 is little explored, and this is particularly the case in the educational field, where practically no studies have been undertaken to date. It is therefore more than obvious that more research is required, if we are to effectively support families who may face disorientation as they attempt to come to terms with the new educational context. Therefore your participation is invaluable for this project.

The interview will be informal but structured to a certain extent. I will seek your opinions and knowledge in the areas of your child/ren's education / schooling, home routines, broadly understood world view and your past educational experiences. The length of the interview will depend on your answers but please reserve two hours if possible. If you would like any further, more detailed information prior to the interview please do not hesitate to ask.

I will have to record the interview in order to transcribe it later but all the information will remain strictly confidential and anonymity will be upheld. Upon the completion of my thesis you are most welcome to view the report, also prior to its assessment.

Thanks once more for agreeing to participate!

Yours sincerely,

Magdalena Lopez Rodriguez

Appendix VIII: Examples of Full Transcript

Example 1 of a translated interview transcript

Edyta (3, project assistant, C)

2 daughters (Gala 10 and Vika 2), Central London,
Roman Catholic Primary School/Church of England Primary

I met this mother in our local library where she was with both of her daughters reading books to them.

Transcript

Bold font – interviewer
Regular font - interviewee

At the moment Gala is in Form 5?

Yes

So when she came here, what Form did she go to?

Year 4

And in Poland, what year was she in?

She was in year 2

Aha so there were 2 years difference.

What kind of school did she go when she came here?

She went to a Catholic school.

And how was this school?

The school was not bad… we did not have a clue about what schools are here so as a matter of fact it was the only school that had a place from January but we were told that religious schools are good and indeed this school was not bad however… the teachers were really really helpful and everything what Gala learned there in the sense of English language was actually in this school. They were helping her a lot. The teaching assistant was with her all the time, she was coming up with excellent ways … (the little girl wants her Mum to prepare milk for her and mother goes off to prepare it)

So how did they help her?

They helped her with English, she was the only Polish… well, she had a friend in her class who was half Polish and half English and this friend initially helped her a lot because she was translating for Gala everything what Gala could not understand because Gala could not understand much. She learnt English in Poland for a year but it was the kind of learning among children, songs and nothing else. They were taking her out during lessons and I remember one great idea they had… they were teaching her English 1 to 1

Every day?

Yes, every day. Here children are getting little books so she would be getting them and reading them at home, the kind of books with one sentence per page. And I remember this idea the teaching assistant had – she told Gala that she wanted to learn Polish and she asked her to make a dictionary for her; a picture, an English word and a Polish word. And Gala was so fascinated by this that she was making this dictionary for her and she was very pleased that she was teaching her teacher Polish and in fact she did not know that she was automatically learning English and they taught her so well that after half a year, not even half a year because she started in January.. and then in July she finished, she went for holidays and then in September she went to a different school. So when in the new school when they got to know that Gala came half a year earlier they thought they would have a lot of work with Gala but the first thing I heard was that they were very surprised with her level of English and that she spoke very good English. And now she really speaks very very good English.

And why did you decide to change schools?

She was on the waiting list to the other school from the beginning because it was a better school, I checked the ofsted results and this school was higher than the previous school and in June they phoned us and said that there was a place and if I wanted to move her. At that time I decided not to move her because it seemed that she already had friends in the other school and she was good academically and we were also planning to move house so I wasn't sure if it would be a good thing to change her school for a month and then change it again. But we have not moved and in September I went to ask if there was a place and thanks God there was the last place in this group.
The main reason for moving was that in the other school the kids were horrid, terribly horrid.

In what sense?

She was constantly… she started to cry and she always liked going to school in Poland. After a month or two she would be leaving school every day crying that the children laugh at her, that they bully her, call her names. There was even an incident that children surrounded Gala and the other Polish girl and said that they cannot attend this school and that they have to go back to Poland and that this school is not for them. So these children there were truly horrible, horrible, horrible…

There was even such situation that when Gala went to school in September because she went the first 2 days of September there but we already new that she would be going to St Andrew's so she took flowers for the teachers and sweets for children and Gala gave away the sweets because she was not sure she wanted to go to St Andrew's she was crying but one of the girls when she was leaving hit her in the face and said that because now she was going to a different school so she did not belong to them anymore and she cannot talk to them anymore. And that day I was late to pick her up and I did nothing about it and I regret it until now. But there were loads, loads of such situations, they were calling her that she has sticking out ears that … various names, horrible, really horrible.

I must say I am shocked because it is rare here.

I thought every school is like that because it was our first school so I did not know that other schools can be different. I assumed that children here are like that. Besides, because Gala has birthday in July so I went to the other school in July and I observed what the lesson looked like. The children are rambling in the class, the teacher speaks, the children do not listen to her, she has to shout, in general there was an impression of a general chaos, the children are not sitting and working and in this school it is totally different.

What are the differences?

If we talk about children age of Gala there is a huge plus for St Andrew's because they demand a lot but they are also strict with them, they shout a lot. I don't understand the psychology of children because they still adore their teachers even if they shout at them and are so strict. It is a plus for the older children because indeed they are well behaved but I am afraid about Vika (her younger daughter) because I am not sure if having this kind of demands from a 10 year old … if they can have from a 3-4 year old.
They in general always shout, they always speak with a raised voice even if they joke.

Was it different in Poland?

Well, in Poland went to a Steiner's school so it was totally different. The class was very small, there were only 9 children in a class, they were treated as partners, they were learning through play so they did not know they were learning and it was a very small school as it was set up a year earlier before Gala started so there were only 3 classes there. It was a group of people that knew each other very well, children were calling everybody 'auntie', bonfires together, activities after school together…very different.

In St Andrew's they have a far greater range of afterschool clubs than in St A.

Does Gala do anything?

She plays guitar, trombone, in general this school is very focused on music, every child plays an instrument, they have a choir and they place a lot of importance on language skills, even in their curriculum they explain that if you do not know the language you do not have the means to develop so she also attends football club, choir, she was also attending art club but they finished it now, also science club and it is all after school.

And outside school?

She goes on Saturdays to Music Service and there she also plays and composes songs and she also goes to the scouts in CF
(We have a brief conversation about scouts)

…and another reason for me to move Gala to St Andrew's was that there were no Polish children there, A (the other Polish girl) has helped her a lot in the beginning but later on Gala has closed herself off from learning English and she only spoke to A and only Polish and was kind of excluded from the English environment.

Perhaps it was an emotional issue.

Maybe? Maybe it was because these children were so horrible to her. I really wanted to find a social circle for her among the English speaking children so she could learn English fast and as in St Andrew's there is no any Polish child so she had to speak English. So I enrolled her to the scouts so she could meet more children. It is so great and she loves it, the leader is of Polish origin, he lived in the US but his grandparents were Polish but he does not speak Polish, he only understand but he is very nice.

I think you are very brave that you are coping so well with Vika and also working, usually mothers give up all extra curricular activities for their older children.

Are you happy with her school?

I am very pleased. I am very pleased with how they teach. I can see that Gala is doing a lot, she writes wonderful, long compositions. I am also very pleased with all clubs that are offered there. She is in a science club because she is very good at science. In general I am satisfied, the way they teach children, how children behave that they are nice to each other. There of course are single situations that… for instance in the beginning there was a girl who wanted to be very bossy to Gala but I only went once to the teacher and the issue was solved and the problem never reappeared. In St A I would go every day and nothing would change.

Is there anything you are not entirely happy with?

Well, one thing that does not suit me.. but it is a plus and a minus… what I do not like that children and parents have a free choice whether the child wants to learn or not. Maybe they explain very well at school and indeed if a child gets to a very good school, it can learn but if you do not supervise the child at home and if you do not look after your child's education then the school, in my opinion, will not push a child to progress.

Do you think in Poland it is different?

In Poland you have to learn because if you do not you repeat the year and they immediately tell you where you are weak and what you have to improve and you have to improve it to pass to another class. And here you don't have to. You can go ahead but in fact never learn what you are supposed to. I do not like it.

And why do you think it is negative?

Because a child here is allowed not to learn and it also places an enormous responsibility on me as a parent. Of course I am responsible for her, she is my child but nonetheless school should… well it does encourage because I must say they encourage and they are very creative in it…but just as I say if a child is in a good school and wants to learn than it is fine but if a child is in a poor school and teaching is mediocre and the teacher is not encouraging enough and when the child does not progress, the teacher does not do anything about it.

Are you in a position to help Gala at home?

I am constantly helping… well I don't know if this is help but I constantly.. she learns every afternoon, she does maths tasks.

So where do the tasks come from?

I bought them in a bookshop. And she does 1 paper every day, you know the 'assessment bond papers', she has to read every day but we are not always so successful with this, she has to practice her instruments every day so …I think it is so normal at this age that if you do not discipline your child and look after so that she works, she won't.

In the former school, where the level was lower, maybe it was also to do with the fact that Gala did not understand all and teachers could not engage her fully but in reality, there are children…for instance I know a child who has problems with writing and reading but at home nobody works with this child, everything is left to the school which up to a certain extent helps to the child but later it only presents a paper that the child has special educational needs and with this paper you go through life and it does not mean that … OK there are children with special needs who have problems but I know this boy – he is absolutely normal, healthy boy and I am convinced that he is able to learn it but nobody demands it from him.

Maybe that is why there are so many illiterate people here?

I think so. But on the other hand there is a good side to the education here – if you specialize here, you really specialize and in Poland you learn a lot of theory, a lot different things but you finish your studies and in fact you know nothing.

You said that St Andrew's was your first choice. Did you have any other criteria than Ofsted?

No, only Ofsted. We just came here, we did not have any friends here, it was the end of December, 30th of December so we only knew people from whom we rented accommodation and they showed us this school and told us that their daughter goes to this school, they showed me its internet website, their daughter moved to another school later so she showed me the schools around and then when I looked at Ofsted reports and when I saw what results St A has..

Is it a bad school?

It is a bad school.

What was your first impression when you entered school because you obviously had experience of Polish schools? Anything surprised you?

It seemed very old, poorly equipped, I did not like it at all, too small, too compact, unpleasant if you are talking about the first impression. I liked St Andrew's – I knew it was a new school, that it is very well equipped, that they have a lot of money so indeed they can offer children a lot.

Anything else?

Of course!!! Smartboard in every class!!! (Laughter). In Poland you still have black boards and chalk and here in every class an interactive board. It is a white board on which you write with your finger and then you tap twice and it changes your handwriting into print – simply incredible things. Also the amount of technology which is in school - it is incomparable with Poland, incomparable…

I remember talking to my sister who is in Ireland and talking to her about smart boards and then my …(unintelligible) said but here we also have computers,

computer suits, children also have computer suits, it is that there is always one computer room but all the other rooms are not equipped with computers. Here everything is based on technology.

Anything else apart from technology?

That they do not sit at desks, that they work in groups and I really appreciate it and also that children are creative during lessons. That they not only absorb but also can express themselves freely, whenever they want, it is like a partnership relationship and not like a lecture to children as it is in Poland.

And they sit in groups? Are these groups set according to levels?

I don't know. In maths yes but in other subjects I don't know.

How is she getting on at school?

She is getting on well. I am thinking what else I could tell you…She came here with very limited knowledge and skills, she had a lot of to catch up when she came, she also had to learn the language that she did not know at al before coming, she had to learn to write because she could only write in capital letters. Well, when we decided to go to the UK I started teaching her to write; nonetheless she caught up everything very quickly. I remember when in St A she had to write a short story and she wrote it in Polish and I was helping her to translate it into English and at present when she has a story to write in English she disappears and writes a story a dozen or so pages, she cannot finish, she writes and writes, she is extremely creative. I don't know how her spelling is because I think she is not yet on the level she should but it is too short but looking back at what she achieved in this short time – she is a genius (laughs..)

If she had all the time that she needs she would overtake others and she would be above average.

And what do the teachers say?

Here the teachers say only good things about children and I don't think it is adequate in reality. When you go to the parents meeting you don't expect to hear that your child doesn't cope with something or is disruptive. No, they say only positive things.

In Poland is it like that?

No, (laughing).. in Poland if they hold a grudge about something they will say immediately and they do not wait for the parents evening but they call to school instantly. I treat parents' evening as moments when I can get advice from teachers if I see that she has some kind of problem and that she could be better at something I ask their advice how I could help her.

How do they help you?

For instance there was time that she really did not like to read and she still reads with a dictionary in her hand she has to check all the words she does not know. When I have to read something with a dictionary – I know it is discouraging. So I said to the teacher that I had this problem and she asked me what Gala is interested in and said she would give me a list of books for Gala.

What I don't like here is that Gala plays trombone and I do not have any comparison how she plays because I do not know anybody who would play trombone. I do not know how her progress should be, how long she should play every day, what she should know by now. She gets the notes and she should play every day 10 minutes but every time I have to remind her – 'Gala you have to do it. You have half an hour to do something else and then you have to play'. I asked her music teacher to motivate her so she would play every day because it is very tiring for me to remind her all the time so the only thing she got was a note in her book was 'please make an effort to practice every day'. Would you be kind to practice…(laughs) this is the way here.

So how would you see it?

I would see it that 'if you want to play, you need to practice every day'. Of course it is not pleasant in the beginning but on the other hand I see how pleased she is with herself when she can do something. Maybe I have high expectations but I would like someone to push her a bit, to pressurize her.

Now I will change the topic. We have already talked about the secondary school but can you tell me about your plans?

We are very confused. I really would like her to go to a good school and I am very worried that the choice is very limited and it seems that there are few schools comparing with the number of children who need places and in fact all parents who I speak to who have children in Y5 or Y6 talk about it as a nightmare.

Is it different in Poland?

Now everything is changing in Poland but when I went to school all was different (laughing..) your grades were decisive. Of course there would be two schools that it was difficult to get to but there were loads of other schools that still were good and it was enough to be a good student to get there but here it is not enough to be good. Yes, if we talk about selective schools it is difficult to get and if you pass your exam well you will get but some schools such as Camden school for girls – they have to take a cross-section so you do not have any influence on whether your child gets there or not because a well passed test is not a guarantee of getting there.

Do you have any fears about it?

Yes. Our choice is Newton but from the school where Gala goes no girl got a place this year. Most children go to PH.

Do you plan to stay in the UK?

We are planning to stay in the UK.

Why?

First of all, we already brought children here once, we changed their environment and I would not like to do it again and also I would not be sure of my situation in Poland, I am not sure we would manage to support ourselves financially. We would have to start everything anew and it is far more difficult than here to start all from scratch in Poland. Here it is difficult to find work but if you find work

here you can be sure that you will manage to get by. There, it is very difficult to find work and if you find it there is no guarantee you will be able to support the family so I would not be able to be sure that I am going to go for good and I would not like to go for 2 years and then to go back again, it is a very different surrounding, different school. It would be a change of an educational system. Here she does not go to a Polish school so she does not do the material of the Polish school.

Why isn't she going?

Now she will be going to a secondary school and I do not want to confuse her too much. When she passes her exam, when she has this stage behind her she will be able to focus on Polish language. She speaks Polish, she writes with mistakes because she did not have time to learn orthography but for history, geography she will have time later. I do not want to overload her now; she has enough now. In Poland it is that if she did not do the material from a particular class she would have to be in a class behind so she would have to be with younger children.

So you will try for selective schools?

We will think about it (she smiles)..

I will still go back to her first school, you told me that she had help from her Polish friend, from a teaching assistant and you as parents did you get any support from the school?

Yes, for instance they were telling us for instance to mix languages Polish and English so Gala could get the flavour of English, she would listen to it . After arrival here Gala for the first 2-3 months Gala did not want to say a word in English, when I spoke to her in English she would not talk to me, she was so reluctant to speak English. But later when they did it through play… because I come from an old Polish school and I thought that if I teach her seriously, with strictness… but no, only later at school through play. Besides she adored her TA and until now whenever she sees her she gives her a hug so it was so much for her. I think she mainly helped her. Also she was learning English through a computer program.

What program?

Computer program, Polish one to learn English; games and playing for a certain age group and she was spending a lot of time on it.

So after a few months she learnt the language so she could communicate well.

Well, after the first 3 months. They say that for the first 3 months one absorbs the language and only later starts speaking. So she was absorbing and I had this impression that she was understanding but it was some sort of mental block, she was completely cutting herself off and did not understand the basic expressions that were spoken to her but then later she opened up and started to talk and talk.

She probably has some friends by now. Where are they from? (I meant nationality but the mother understand something else)

They are from her new school.

Does she meet them?

She meets them in fact only at school. She also has friends in the neighbourhood and she plays with them here in front of the house but with the ones from school only at school.

Where are their friends from?

You are asking me difficult questions.. (Clearly the mother was surprised I was asking this question and when we were later walking our children she told me that she cannot stand when English people ask her where she is from because it was in her eyes only for the purposes of establishing the boundaries of 'us/them'). I can only guess, you would have to ask Gala. Tasneem is I think British…

White British?

No, black… Nazim is either from India or from one of these countries.

Do you know their parents?

No, not at all?

Do you know any parents from this school?

I do but I know the parents more because of Vika rather than Gala because the parents also have younger children and they take them to toddler groups and in this way I was meeting them. Where are they from....?

They are, some of them, English, some from Kosovo but our children are not very close. We like each other but our children are not closest friends and don't often play together. You see, I don't have the habit of asking people where they are from so this question… I do not know…

So I will ask differently. Your friends here, you know 'real friends' – where are they from?

You know… *(Pause)* I know a few people from Poland and this is because I was going to the college here. I know a few people from school, I know Agnieszka who is also Polish. I don't know where they are from (*she is a bit irritated by now..)* I know people from Kosovo, English…

Well, than I doubt they are your friends if you do not know where they come from *(I laugh..)*

The question where people come from… when I came here I heard so much that Poles are very unwelcome here and so often I face this question ' Where are you from ' which I consider very rude and very inadequate. I never ask this question. When somebody, especially from England asks me during our first meeting where I am from, then I immediately withdraw… it is the matter of establishing – 'are you or are you not?' It is not that, maybe you are from an interesting country but it is 'you are another immigrant.

Why do you think so?

Because I read too many articles from Daily Mail (*laughs loudly)*

You know it is a foreign country so we will never be here at home and I think it is dragged somewhere behind me.

How involved do you feel in the life of school?

Not particularly *(laughs)..*

Why?

It is not the matter of England it is the matter of my personality, I simply am not able, it is very difficult for me, I simply do not do it, If someone asks me yes, but it is hard for me to get into a group of people that I do not know and have an initiative. I usually stand on the side until I feel comfortable to interact.

OK and what about involvement in the education of your children?

A lot, a lot, a lot… It is the main point on the agenda now.

Why is it so important?

Because it is her future. Besides it is also this wretched English system and a deficient number of secondary schools. A child at the age of 10, 11 – if the child does not get to a good school it is so difficult to achieve something in life later. It already stays with the child and not through his fault. This system, at the age of 10, 11 may classify you to either people of success (winners) or losers. So I do not want it to be more difficult rather than easier.

And who communicates with the school?

Me and only me. M simply does not like it.

So you speak fluent English.

Yes.

So can you tell me, what do you do here?

For the last two weeks I am working.

What do you do?

I manage a project in a Council which helps single parents to access education, employment and find funds for childcare. It is very interesting and very good job, I really really enjoy it. Earlier I worked as a volunteer and before that I was with Vika.

And your partner?

He works for a construction company. He does bathrooms and as soon as he does his driving licence he was asked to become a manager in this company.

What about future plans/aspirations for your children?

I said to Gala that in the future she can do whatever and she can become whoever providing that it will be either a doctor or a solicitor *(laughs…)* Of course it was a joke but nevertheless, they both have to be very well educated, no question … and I am 100% convinced that one has to engage them in it that it cannot be left in their hands. I would like them to choose so that they are happy with what they are doing.

What do you think helped Gala integrate here?

I don't know… We enrolled her to scouts so she could meet other children; the new school also helped her. I think that St A. disturbed her on the way to integration. You know the first impression that children can be so horrible and impolite and unpleasant because she came here very open with the willingness to mix with other children.

Is it different in Poland?

She went to a private school in Poland but in state schools certainly a lot of nasty things are going on but she has not experienced it at all. Before she came here we presented her this as an opportunity that it is an adventure and that she should not be afraid and that was the way she was prepared for it and she encountered a wall. In fact she does not have friends from St A. Only A.

What do you think schools could do for Polish children?

My attitude is that it is very good that school wants to help children of migrants but my emigration was my personal decision and I had to be prepared for all sorts of troubles that she could have here and I do not think that I have the right to place the responsibility on the shoulders of the school or its government to teach my child English just because she is a foreigner. I think it is a responsibility of the parent. It is good that the school helps as they helped Gala, I am really grateful for that but I do not think that they should treat it as their duty. It is my duty. I do not think that they should organise additional lessons or place more resources for these children just because these children do not know English. It is not their (the school's) fault..

Aha…

I have a complex of an immigrant *(she laughs…)* I think.

M, did he come here a lot earlier?

Yes, a lot earlier… *(She told me to switch the recorder off and asked if it is OK to say that he worked here illegally before 2004)*

Thank you!

Example 2 - full transcript

Nina (4, contract work as data analyst, A)

1 son (Tomek 7/10), Crouch End,
Non-denominational Community Primary School

The interview took place in the participant's home. This was the first interview and is more structured than the further interviews I carried out. It is an authentic, unedited transcription.

Bold font – interviewer
Regular font – interviewee

Transcript

First of all…I want to…you have got just Tomek.

Just Tomek, I have got just one child…

So were do you come from, yourself?

I come from Poland.

And what language do you speak at home?

We speak English, yeah…predominantly English?

Do you speak any other language?

I speak Polish.

And your partner?

My partner just speaks English.

Is he English

He is of mixed origin but his native language and the only language he speaks is English.

Do you live altogether in this house?

We do, yes we do.

And Tomek is he five or six?

He is five; he will be six in May. So he is still five.

Tell me, what school is he going to? What kind of school is it?

He is attending a primary school, which is just a few minutes walk away from us.

How would you describe the school?

Do you want a full name of the school?

No, not at all, I just want…

It a small, community school most parents would live in a walking distance from the school, it only has one form…is that what you are asking me? It has very nice surroundings, it's in the park.

OK, so I am going to ask you a little bit about yourself…about your education. Do you do any paid work at the moment?

No, not at the moment.

But you used to…

Yes, I used to.

And what was it?

I used to work as a systems analyst and I worked for about 15 years before having Tomek.

And if I asked you a question: do you work now, what would you answer?

No, no, I am a housewife…well I do unpaid work, in the house.

So what is work for you?

Work is any activity that one does to help, make things happen…not just for yourself but for other people as well...Usually things that have to take place...in order for the house to function you have to do the housework and that is...so some kind of necessary activity as in contrast to leisure which may not necessarily take place...or may but you do it for your own pleasure.

So work is not a pleasure?

(laughing) No, it can be pleasure, it can be pleasure but it is also something that has to take place. It is difficult to define housework as such; it is easier paid work because it is something you have to do in order to receive your salary.

How important is in your circumstances paid work? How do you feel about it? You are not working at the moment?

I would like to do part time work, the kind of work that gives me satisfaction and also a little bit of income so this income would help, give security to the family. Now my husband is the only person on whose income we have to rely… but I find it a little bit difficult to fit work, I haven't actually attempted to find any work.

Why not?

Because I am aware that in my profession it is difficult to find part time work and in the past, when I had Tomek and I worked, as well I found it difficult to reconcile both and I found that work was putting a lot of demands on me, even if it was just a part time work it was really a full time work for doing part

time hours and I feel that the whole family was missing out on that I cannot spend much time with Tomek and things were much more hectic in our life.

I will ask you now about you moving to England. When was it? It was quite a while ago…?

Yes, it was in 81 so it was about 24 years ago.

And why did you come?

Well at that time I came to Britain to study English but in Poland there was …a situation has developed in Poland, very insecure, which subsequently led to martial law being introduced...imposed in Poland and being faced with such difficulties in Poland and changes I did not agree with, I decided to stay in Britain and I was given a permission to stay.

Where you granted asylum?

No it was not on the base of asylum, it was an exceptional leave to remain that was being extended every year and eventually I could apply for residence.

How do you feel now? Is it your country? Do you plan to stay here forever?

Yes, I do feel I have got my home here and it is my country, I might move for the retirement for instance, for the weather, for the good weather… (laughing)

Where would you move?

Where it's a bit warmer but we have not got any immediate plans, it s rather dreams, conversations we occasionally have.

Do you ever think about going back to Poland?

Ah.., that would be difficult to achieve because my husband would not particularly like it and I don't think I would find Poland the way I remember it …most of my working life was here and it would be difficult to settle back in Poland again.

I will focus now a bit on Tomek's schooling… How did you find the place in the school for Tomek and how did you go about enrolling him to this particular school?

My first experiences was of great anxiety if he is going to be accepted for this particular school as it is in a great demand and you know, parents are really fighting to get places but my first experience of the school was that he actually went to the pre-school nursery there and that gave me an impression that this is the school I want him to be in and I wanted him to get used to the environment and that nursery is a very nice nursery and very well equipped...

How did you know that it was such a nice school before you send him to the nursery?

You just get a feel from looking at it and you talk to neighbours as well what they think of it... Are they happy? So you get to talk to people who live in the community so they have their own opinion of the school and you also look at it…and there was a meeting when he was in the nursery. Not many children who get to the nursery get to the school, not all of them…it's about half perhaps or even less and school also invites parents who get interested in the school for a meeting about a year before the school year starts and give them more or less indication what are their children's chances to get in and also shows them around and tells them about the school's ethos, their approach to learning. The head teacher took us around and showed us different rooms and that gave me a very positive feeling about the school.

Very interesting…and when you enrolled Tomek in the nursery you said you found it very welcoming…were there any other surprises? Something that you did not expect? Something different to what you expected? Any problems?

I found they were quite structured in the nursery. I felt that almost education started in the nursery and the children would have to be quiet when they were in the nursery, they would have the carpet sessions, they would not maybe be learning letters but they would be expected to complete some tasks and there would be sort of sessions on the carpet where they would have to count. They would be watched and observed and they would get a feedback about their performance in the nursery…how well they are doing and what tasks they are participating in and what not…

Can I ask you…why has it surprised you because if you are talking about it, it means that somehow…

It was because …perhaps because he was in another nursery which had a completely different approach, it was very sort of easy going and children were not expected to take part in the activities (if they did not want). I also had this image of the childhood which is free of any demands and expectations for this age group. On the other hand, I was pleased about it because I could compare my child against the others and I know that they were trying to complete a program so they would see if the child is using scissors while in the other nursery, the one which had a more free approach I was not necessarily sure if he was going to learn to use scissors if he does not want to.

So comparing the two approaches, do you have any preferences?

(long silence) I find them on two extremes and I would like to have something in between. I found that the school's one was a little bit too rigid and I found that the other one a little bit…you know I would expect from the teachers more input trying to coach children into doing something. In fact it turned out when Tomek left this nursery that he had difficulties holding the pen, he would not complete certain art tasks, he would not glue things so I realised after a year of being in this free nursery he would not actually acquired any…You know sharing toys, he did not acquired any skills he was actually expected.

What kind of nursery was the first one, was it far away, was it a private nursery?

It was a private nursery, it was a very nice nursery…God I forgot the…

No I don't need the name

No, no…it's…what…hmm…It has escaped me…you know…what that German sort of teacher who…

Oh…Montessori?

No, not Montessori, the other type?

Steiner?

Steiner's yeah, it was a Steiner's nursery, where they actually believe that children should actually be encouraged to do what they want so the children take the lead, which is actually an excuse for you know not doing very much.

Is it an excuse for you now or did you think that before you enrolled Tomek in this nursery?

Now, from the perspective I think that perhaps they did not make enough effort. In fact when he went to the school's nursery he was still carrying on in the other nursery two days a week and I went to this nursery to tell them to put more effort to encourage them to do art work with them and they finally started doing that.

Arch work? (I did not understand Nina was talking about art work)

Yes, because he would not want to participate in any art work, they would let him not to participate. You know the philosophy is that if the child does not want to do something you just leave the child because the child will do it in their own time and they will come to you and ask for it, which I don't actually believe this approach worked with Tomek, with my child…because if he doesn't think he has to do something, he will not do it, he must be encouraged and made believe that he can do something successfully and then he will start to do more of it. So some children would actually actively come and ask you to help them in developing certain skills and would show a lot of initiative and I think that was the experience of Steiner's that about 90 percent of the children would do that but those who don't, they just get left out and they are just free, floating and maybe have a great time but they don't get the skills that the next place up expects them to have.

OK, now I am going to ask you …well we talk about it all the time…about your attitude towards Tomek's school. So you said that you liked the school from the beginning and that is why you decided Tomek to be in this school. You said you had some anxieties whether Tomek would get to this school…but the school is so close to your house…

Yes, but the catchment area is very tight and sometimes people living in the same road would not get to the school because you have a lot of siblings as well, there is only one class…depending on how many siblings are in the class and maybe there are only 12 places left for the newcomers.

So what is good and what is bad about this school?

There are a lot of good things to say about the school but …I think the school does whatever they can to make children feel secure and relaxed. My…you know it is a small school everybody knows everybody, it is easy to communicate with the teachers, teachers are quite approachable, they welcome parents in the classrooms so if you want to come and help, even if you are not really helping but your real reason for coming is to see how… You

know…how the lessons are held or…you know…what they are doing with children you are still welcome to do so.

Can I ask you - are all parents equally welcome, no problem…whatever the background?

Nobody was told not to come. A lot of parents chose not to because they have got their own things but whoever wants to help they are always told that they are welcome to come and see for ourselves what they are doing or help if we can help with something and that was the case in Reception as well as in Year 1, I am not sure what is it going to be like.. It has got good communication with the parents and …both formal and informal…you always get a letter, every Friday what they have been doing and what they are going to be doing next week.

Really?

Parents seem to be very involved in the school, there are a lot of fairs and events and because it is a small school you get to know a lot of parents yourself. That is, sort of, positive things. On the negative…I still got to say… I think not always your concerns are going to be listened to and taken on board and the head teacher would tend to have his own opinion on things and sometimes he overrules the parents. Sometimes the things…the actions would not be taken and administration is not always as tight and organised as you would expect …but not in a sort of bad…

Can you give me any example of how, for instance, something would not be taken seriously by the head.

The thing that comes to my mind is about that the parents' group was asked to organise after school clubs and one of the clubs was booked for certain day and the head teacher decided that he wanted to rent our school premises for that day to a commercial company so I feel he overruled the parents wishes here. I have not got too many yet…maybe other parents who are here longer maybe they have more sort of to say, there are some weakness apparently in juniors in terms of teachers but I have not got so far yet. At the moment I am quite happy with the teachers. I would say they are little bit… but you see I am not su…another concern I have is that I don't think the special needs are being taken care of really as they should maybe it's because it is a small school and it does not have resources. In a lot of other schools they seem to be better prepared to cater for children who fall behind with their learning and here we have got only one person I think two days a week for the entire school who is a special needs teacher but she can't really give much support. For instance in our class we had a girl that had a Down syndrome and it took a while to find somebody and sometimes she actually wonders around the class and teachers have to take care of her and you know they have to teach, they have to teach there the children.

So she would not have like…individual support?

Like in the Reception she would have support for half a day but the other half she would have to be in the class with everybody else and she really needs a very specialised teaching…and I remember the occasions when in Year 1 she was wondering around as well and she would not stay still so the teacher had to chase her around the class.

So you are saying it is not fair on teachers?

It is not fair on teachers; it is not fair on everybody else. I understand that there is this inclusion policy here that children with special needs have to be included but I think they have to be given a better support, there is a group of children now in the class that has fallen behind with their learning and I don't think they are given enough support despite the fact that we always have got two teachers. I feel that for this year group extra resource should be available to help the children more on individual bases.

Right…

I am not sure how it is being done in other class…schools but from talking to the parents I have an impression that they have better resources, they have a special class where children who have a problem go into and then when they catch up they are sent to the mainstream class.

I have a similar problem in a sense with my son because I am not happy that he is not getting any support for his speech and I have discussed it with them and I know that in Poland he would get the support but here he is not getting it as they treat it as not serious. But it is…

Another thing that I feel is that administration has failed is that Tomek has been referred to the educational…he was put on special needs register and that was over a year ago, around January and then he, we had…he has been referred to the educational sociologist and it has taken almost a year for an educational psychologist to actually see him. The first time it turned out that the psychologist was on the pregnancy leave and then it turned out that somehow the local authority did not get the letter that Tomek was on the …there was some sort of breakdown in communication between the school and the authority but the school has not been actually following up and checking despite the fact that they were actually telling me it was urgent, they were actually not following it up so in September he did not get seen either. Only has he been seen in January, so it has taken almost a year and I think that the school is responsible for not following it up and finally when the psychologist turned up I found her support to Tomek and her input negligible…like very very little, inadequate to what was really required, she had not even seen him and has never even talked to him and she already decided to pass him onto the child development centre without even having a simple conversation with him, only on the basis of talking to teachers and the advices she has given to teachers …

Why do you think she has not talked to Tomek? Because she did not have time?

I think she thinks there was no need for it… we are talking now about April and he has been referred to the psychologist over a year ago, she has been on his case two months but she has not actually seen him. I spoke on the phone to her and I asked her what …you know because we are waiting for the response from the child development centre …in the meantime what advice have you given to teachers? And she told me: I have told them to break instructions for him in a more step by step manner…but nothing really geared up to his specific needs and you know…I am sure that teachers…if they have not worked it out themselves …what kind of teachers we are talking about?

Yes, it is common sense…

Another think that strikes me, which I found later, is that in England teachers have not had psychology as a part of the course and it actually shows up in their approach to children…

How does it show?

I don't think that they can really interpret children's behaviour…they have some knowledge, some experience, maybe read about it but I don't think they apply this knowledge of psychology to interpret the children's behaviour correctly, they tend to say: oh, the child has got a problem, very quickly jumping to this kind of conclusions rather than looking at the environment what kind of dynamics go on in the class and maybe think from the child's perspective what the child is going through and I think that teachers here are very target oriented, very mechanical and there is very little…teachers do not have any support from other professions, not enough support, not enough resources what they are attempting to do because they attempt to teach very young children, very early and there is not actually any professional network for those who actually fall behind.

Why do you think it is like that?

You see the school Tomek goes to is quite focused on arts and they have always been advocating that the children need to have more play so they… but even in the school like that I can see that the play has been almost completely removed from the school and they are forced by government policies because they have to have an hour of literacy and numeracy from Year 1, once they apply that there is very little time …they have got targets…when you look at the classroom it is very task driven, very target orientated what children have to learn and achieve and how they have to deliver national curriculum and…

You spoke about the curriculum…what do you think about the curriculum present in English schools? Obviously you can compare it with for instance your own childhood…

My impression is that they are trying to do too much too quickly with too little children and it is delivered at a cost to the children.

What cost?

The cost is that they are not getting enough of what children at that age group should be doing, maybe having more peer communication and maybe more focused on the social skills, on their language development, communication and there is too much focus on formal teaching too early.

I think I very much agree with you...

It is a very long day spent in the school, it is like three quarters of a day spent in the school and not having enough play and another think I don't really like is that the lunch time hour is not really very structured. I think that for five, four year olds to fight for themselves in a quite tough environment…because they have to survive, to make friends, some of them they do not have good social skills, they are not given enough help, guidance, there is very little I would say structured play guided by a teacher or games, they do it in the Reception but they say OK we have done it that is the end of it , now it is Year 1 and we now seriously going to deliver the targets, you had your bit (laughing)…but it should be more ongoing because later there is a problem of bullying and the children are not behaving to each other in a

proper way because it has never been picked up enough in the early years and they are really left for themselves on the playground…I would cut down on the lunch hour or I would have more staff out there to help to organise the games.

What about music, PE…?

Yes, again I don't think they have enough PE; they only have about two sessions.

It is still good, in E's school it is only half an hour a week and it is usually taken away because there is something more important to do…

So I would like more…and when I speak to the teachers…like my mother in law is a teacher in Reception she said that in her times they had PE three or four times a week, they had games, they had a little bit of drama, a bit of singing in the class, a bit of fun activities, there is not enough fun, there is very little of art activities going on …in Year 1 it has all been dropped out, I think they need it so I would like everything to be shifted upwards and what they do in Year 1 I would rather see it in Year 2 and in Year 1 I would like to see more activities and I think it used to be the case several years ago, but all got shifted downwards and all got formal learning, I was really surprised how much they covered in Reception.

I am quite shocked…you see, within three or four months…I don't know what they have been doing that E. can read almost anything and all the other children …which means - where is the space for other development? If his letters are like mine when I was 9-10 and he is only five...

It would be interesting to see those children in five years time and how they would actually improve statistics because somewhere there will be a problem with the children who are left behind, maybe 10-20 percent; they will find it difficult to catch up and those children will be a big problem in the future for the education system. At the moment there is a big worry that there is a big percentage of children weak in literacy and numeracy when they are testing them and I just wonder …I think children are missing out on something more important in development like good communication, like developing social skills, which would help in their job prospects even more than good writing and good numeracy, because those interpersonal skills are important and it is taken for granted that it can be learnt at home but at home we are talking about families breaking down, people spending too much time in front of TV, not enough talking, so schools have often to fill this gap to teach children those skills because home maybe actually failing as well as the time left at home…parents are working…

Absolutely true…now, you were talking about the lack of social, emotional development comparing with the academic level. So would you say that the academic level is good?

They are also very lucky that…hmmm...(thinking)…you know …that the children who are there are quite able, that we have not got disruptive children in our classes, there is a good intake basically.

OK, what do you mean by good intake?

Good…that children are relatively well behaved, they are not disruptive, they tend to fit in well with the school, they want to learn, they seem to be well motivated…

So why do you think some children are like that and other children not, because you say it is a good intake, if you say that in this particular school the intake is good…why do you think the children are like that?

It is a…a lot of parents, a lot of mums tend not to work before the children go to school so they would spend a lot of time developing the children, their abilities…also it tends to be a middle-class, although it is not…I would probably say half or three quarters…a lot of mums are working, even if they are not middle class they are well motivated for the children to do well so the children would come…it is not a deprived area, children do not tend to be deprived, they may be a few isolated cases but they tend to be stable families, with a sort of stable income, with parents who are well motivated for their children to do well.

Can I ask you..? You said that half or three quarters are middle-class families here. How do you know who are and who are not?

From (sudden hesitation), from the job people do, you know…from the language they use …eh…from the manners and behaviour… you know…you can sense people who have some sort of education and …

So how do they behave as compared with those who don't?

Well… (laughing)…you are testing my prejudices here…

No, if you don't want to talk about it just tell me…

It is a very good question because it is a very … it depends on your perception and it is very subjective and it is an impression…they may not be middle class and it does not really matter if it is a working class or not and it is a wrong really term to use, that is I before said…stable families, stable homes…they may be working class but it does not matter that is a stable environment, stable income, there seem to be good focus on motivating children and parents tend to behave well towards other parents so the fact that they are working classes/middle classes is really irrelevant, what is more relevant is that there is shared the sort of value of the environment, community and they take care to interact well with the school community and other parents and I think it impacts on the children as well.

What do you think about the teachers in this school…I know it is difficult to talk about it in general…what would you say?

They are very good and efficient teachers in delivering the curriculum, they are quite innovative the way they use their methods and I would rate them high…what I am a little bit concerned is...hmmm…as I said with the Reception teacher, although she was excellent, she was a tiny bit inexperienced, she did not have the great weight of experience behind her and that is why she was a little bit lost with children who would differ from the average what she would expect. The ones that would behave different...she would have a little bit of difficulty… but she was very lucky because it was exceptionally well behaved class and…but there was a little bit of issue there…you know I have got the system which is geared up to teach average children because this is what the government tells me that all children should do well with that system and you know…there are certain children that are not following that

...So that is where the lack of support comes from the wider teaching community because it is such small…

So are you happy with your child's achievement?

Well, I can say I was made to believe by the teachers that it is my child's fault and if he is not behind with his development behind his peers, and you know…does he have some sort of more serious problems or special needs but saying that…I actually wonder having done more work on my child if that is necessarily the case, because what I noticed is that in Reception he found it so difficult to settle and he found the school so difficult and that he missed out on a lot of learning in Reception and then Year 1 assumes that this knowledge has been already gained and it builds up on this pre-existing knowledge so for him it is…he has got this gap between him and other children that he finds difficult to breech, lots of teaching in Year 1 would be above what he can grasp at the moment and that is why hi is not grasping and now I don't think he is given the adequate support and help to bridge that gap. They are basically implying that there is something wrong with him and that he has got a lot of weaknesses and problems and that is why they cannot teach him in the classroom. I think what I would like to do is to have some sort of program, in coordination with me because I don't think I was given enough help from the teachers how I could help my child and maybe not enough knowledge, information about other ways of teaching him and doing things…

Are there teaching assistants in his class?

There are always two people present, he has...teachers have a job share and he also has a teaching assistant as well, there is usually two people in the class teaching, but there are a lot of children in the classroom so they cannot focus on my child. In Poland there is a different system…you see I am an older generation from Tomek so it is difficult to compare and I don't have much knowledge of the recent system, some knowledge from my family in Poland but children in Poland start school later, which I think is very helpful. In the kindergarten they would develop more socially and creatively and they would develop through play, which I think is very valuable so when they go to school a lot of them reach the level which is required for learning, reading, writing…there is the mental capacity there at the age of six and seven so it is an easier exercise for them, they learn quicker so they are less frustrated , that is one think another is that the Polish language is actually much easier to learn …you know…it took me two days to learn to read and you can do it very quickly once you know the rules and you get this gratification very easily, this sense of achievement and here ..I can see with Tomek…Yes, he learnt to blend letters together but constantly the words come which do not fit into this pattern so he gets frustrated so it is much more difficult…

Maybe that is why they start so early…

Yes, how much they have to memorise, how much it is actually repetition, I found that too early they have to struggle with actually too much, too painful for them to actually learn, too much repetition and some of them get fed up and bored with this repetition.

In any other aspects do you think there are any differences?

There are some positives…Well, another difference is the length of time the children spend at school because in Poland you know they would start earli-

er but they would have fewer hours, so they would also have life after school, it is not just school the whole day.

I like the expression 'life after school'.

No… (laughing) .. But they would have friends, they would play, parents can do something with them. I find also…because children go to school when they are more mature it requires less efforts from parents to help children with the school help…you know…the children may be much more independent and they are not relying all the time on parents; here you feel that you have to drag them and help them and if you don't help your children at home you don't feel that they are actually going to do that by themselves, whereas in Poland you can just leave them…like my parents would not be helping me and I was just completely independent. Maybe because we were girls…there is something like school maturity where children can actually think for themselves, maybe motivate themselves…and it is at their level…you know…a lot of kids would actually follow the program with much more ease; here it seems to be like beyond many of the children. But the thing that I like here in England is that the teaching is delivered in a variety of methods…but again it is difficult to compare as the seven to eight will have teaching in the classroom in Poland, sitting in those long rows and it was I must say sort of boring and here there is maybe a bit more variety, they have a carpet session, they have a thing at the table where they have to produce something. I don't know what's later on but you don't get this traditional classroom set up, you know all children facing just one teacher who is lecturing, they would get to do something, more variety.

In Poland as I remember there was no any concept of altering the program according to different abilities…

That is right. Yes, here they are split into the tables according to their abilities.

What do you think about these tables?

At the moment I think it is good because they have different abilities and different speeds. How that is… I am a bit concerned how it is going to be later…you know… is it always going to be seen that the weaker ones are going to be stuck, it is going to become quite obvious for them they are being streamed. It is sort of necessary because they are starting so early they have to do it maybe if they started a bit later it would not be so obvious, but that is why it makes it so hard to teach them because you have got such spread of abilities across the whole classroom and that is why it is so difficult to do it to manage.

Now, I would like to ask you about the times before you had Tomek and you had probably some imaginings about schooling system in Britain …how did you imagine it then…What kind of ideas did you have about the schools then?

To be honest I was taking very little interest but I had this…because it has been debated in the press, there were a lot of problems highlighted, usually negative so I had this impression and I actually have a positive impression now, after he started school.

Why did you have negative…

Because the media tend to pick up on problems and not the good aspects so you hear about the violence, bullying and disruptive children and problem children and teachers having problems with parents, parents having problems with head teachers, parents being violent.

Well, so you did take interest…

Well, it is difficult to escape because you get it in the news but the items that make the news are the extreme sort of items …yes I have just had those concerns about the schools in England generally but I am sort of very positively disappointed that the children in the school seem to be well behaved, teachers are very committed and seem to be well organised.

So now I am going to ask you about your values, perhaps not necessarily about schooling but education in a broader sense…so if I ask you for instance…Tomek is in a state school?

Yes, it is...

If you could or if there was a good private school around and there wasn't any good state school around, would you send Tomek to a private school or…have you ever considered it?

Only if I felt that the state school is failing…You see, I had the experience of nurseries and from my experience of nurseries is that the state ones were much better, had much better standards in that area at least…than the private ones. I was disappointed with the quality in the private ones, I felt that the staff commitment, staff qualifications were much lower and that they were not delivering value for money so I would have the same problem with schools…with primary schools so it would have to be really very bad school for me…primary school for me to consider a private school.

So why do you think quite a few English parents prefer to send their children to private schools?

Not in this area, not around here, because around here …eh…primary schools are good, they have good reputation so people tend to try to buy the house in the right catchment area to get to a good school. But in some areas like for example some of my friends live in Surrey where there is a big percentage of parents sending their children to private schools and the ones who go to state schools… you know the state school are the drain of the children who are maybe able children and the reminder of parents are considering the private schools as well for that reason…I find that there are many parents who live in the catchment area of the primary school which has not got a very good reputation and they all will be wondering…and they all will end up taking their children to some religious schools or driving them very far and avoiding that school. I am sure that if all got together they would change the appearance of this school ...but they had those concerns.

Well, it is difficult to get together …

The parents would have the concerns about a big percentage of non-native English speakers…

Sorry, say it again…

Parents of English families would have concerns if a school has a large percentage of non-English speaking children...let's say, if you have a 50 per-

cent…It all depends on the percentage… if it is 30/40/50 percent they will be worried about the standard of teaching in that school being lower, kids not relating to other kids, maybe there is a large migrant population, and that population …there is a concern about parents moving, children, not staying long in the school and moving on to another school so it is a very transient, the migrant population; that is what are the worries of some parents … I would say unfounded because I know one parent who has sent her child to such school and she is very pleased with the teaching methods and finds the teachers very committed and children..

Where is the parent from?

The parent is English, she is actually a teacher herself and the school in question is in south H., which has a high population of sort of Turkish…you know Arabic, Kurdish and Greek children, it has very few native English children.

How would you consider yourself and what do you think other English parents… would they consider you as a minority which is actually welcome?

I think it all comes down to your child's command of English …you know if you have an English speaking child, who has a good grasp of the language and also if you are willing to blend in and communicate and… with English speaking parents then they would probably consider you as one of their own, but if you keep yourself to yourself and tend to go on with your own community and your child does not speak English then you would be viewed as an ethnic minority.

So how do you think they view you?

Hmm…it is interesting…you see my school it is a mixed school so they will be very few English parents I think it is only one third of English as sort of white English parents and other children will be mixed so therefore people would make it more…it seems natural that approach that community has to be wider...I think they would consider me as one of the non-ethnic minority…more as English … it is difficult to …

So you don't know where you are…

No, not English… you cannot be considered as English and I am not even sure if the line goes across …are you considered to be a middle class? Are you considered to have similar values as them and some of the desires and values and interests as them or not … that is I think where the line goes across…rather then … I think it is a bigger gap between the English middle class parent who has got certain values and a parent from a very deprived background and who has very different sort of values …I think there is a much bigger gap than between a foreign parent and an English parent with similar values and similar sort of background and education. I think an education it is a big linking factor… it sort of goes across and bridges this gap of different nationalities.

If we go back to independent schooling …do you think they have their place in society? Do you think they should exist?

(thinking) I would like to say that all good schooling should be delivered by the state and to have too many private schools I would say is probably damaging rather than helpful because in theory …they can say it is a parents'

choice but also what would happen is that they may drain a lot of children away from the state schools so the state schools would deteriorate and the private schools would not necessarily deliver because they will be struggling in competing about the best value and the cheapest prices and sometimes there will be too many often to make profit they will be undercutting themselves by trying to deliver better value for parents, which sometimes result in dropping educational standards …I would be worried about the quality of standards because who is checking on those private schools…we say market forces would decide…but not in education…It is not like going to the supermarket, you know…once your child starts school you cannot just take him because the standards dropped to another school and then another school. It is not like buying goods so you want that stability and you want someone to ensure that there are good standards; you know the school has to have an established reputation. I would see in the area with very badly ran state schools where the parents would like to take their children to private schools…

Do you know any parents who..?

Not around here…you know…there is always this critical (unclear) in a school. If that school has got a good reputation, more and more people want to send their children there, better and better children go to this school so the school improves and if the school is failing the parents want to take their children out of that school and they would opt for private and sometimes ...hmm…yes…it is tricky...it is always a difficult issue. I would see it more for a secondary school as an option because the secondary schools…

Well, if you stay in this area you may face the problem, let's say that Tomek does not get to the school you mention and you don't have any other option… he does not get any good state school what would you do?

Well I would consider moving out or going private … if the option would be going to this Academy or move out I would move out to the good catchment or I would send him privately… sending to the Academy is out of question… He would not go there...

Why is it out of question? Why would not you send him there?

Hmm… (laughing) … because it is not just about the teaching standards, it is about how hard your child would try in certain environments, how well your child would fit in…

Why would not Tomek fit in?

If he would… I can't actually say because Tomek is only six years old so if I would feel that he would fit in well in that school with its ethos and values and the majority of children then it would not be a problem to send him there. You see I know very little about this school … if it had good teaching standards I would not have any objections but I have to feel that this child belongs there and if it fits with a good number of children, is not in the minority, because if he is the minority he can be bullied and you know and he can have a lot of problems, also his potential might not be developed in an environment he cannot thrive, if he has a scientific interest and he goes to the school where most children want to, let's say play football, he probably, not having children similar to himself would be probably very, would probably set him back…

Now a few questions about your family routines…who are your friends? Where are they from?

Quite a few friends from the school and some friends from place I used to work with and some Polish friends as well so obviously I take care of keeping in touch with children from my country.

And the people from the school, work, where do they come from?

Tend to be English or sometimes like mixed background...like from the school there will be somebody who is of Greek origin or American origin or English.

Origin? But they would be settled here

Yes, they would be.

And the Polish friends - how do you meet them?

Well, I met some of them when I was settling in England so they would be long-standing friends from the times when we were trying to find new ways in our country and there are certain people I met later on maybe through Tomek because we made some attempts to go to a Polish school and to get to know some Polish parents as well. It is important for me that he does keep in touch with his Polish background even if he does not learn Polish.

So it is important for you…why? Normally parents would say it is for the language.

It is a cultural heritage, it makes him I think more secure that he knows where he comes from, where his roots are…and he gets some exposure to the language. I find it very difficult for him…you know I would prefer for him to speak Polish but I did not manage to teach him but the second best is if he knows a few words and he has got some cultural links to the country he is from.

What would you do during weekends?

We haven't got a specific routine, we often would like…three of us, both of us and Tomek.. we would try to do something, weekend tend to be sort of around him and what he would like to do, at least one day so it might be going to the cinema, it might be going on the bikes, depending on the weather. Well last summer we spent a lot of time cycling with Tomek to Golden Hills or Sunny Valley.

What other parents from Tomek's school would do?

A lot of children would have activities at the weekend, like last year Tomek was going to the Polish school, this year I did not arrange anything because I don't want to…you know…like overload him, sometimes I will meet up with another parent as well and we will do something like a cycle ride…I am planning to get him into swimming lessons with other children.

So it means children have it structured…

Yes, they have it structured, on Saturday children might have some classes and the rest is filled with family time, maybe visiting someone

So do you think it is good…would you like to have it more structured?

I think I would prefer to have it more structured, last year we had more of it, like Tomek would regularly play with another child on Saturdays and have the Polish school. Yeah, this year we have not developed the routine.

Do you engage Tomek in any cultural activities?

(without any hesitation) Yeah, we go to the museums as well but I tend to…or what we often do…my husband was friendly with another dad from school and they would take them for cycle rides to the park or a museum so we do that as well…so it is either a museum or a cinema.

Why do you do it - is it important to you?

It goes with his interest, he seems to be interested in things around him and information books so going to the museums is to build on this sort of interest and giving him the extra …different dimension to it because museums are sometimes much more interesting for showing some sort of information and he seems to enjoy this kind of trips…all the museums are geared up to make things attractive for children so you know he would always learn something from those sessions.

So do you have any kind of imaginings about Tomek's future? Anything?

Well, it is a tricky one because until recently, that is until he went to school I would imagine that he would have higher education but because he has difficulties at school I am not sure what his trends are going to be. I cannot push him into academic education if he is not academically inclined. I assume he is going to be like us but he might not and actually he might not be successful academically. And if he is not successful academically than I would like him to learn a trade, a good trade, maybe to go into business and be independent. If he is successful academically, then I would like him to follow that route and maybe, as he is showing quite a lot of interest in science maybe would like him to go in this direction, engineering and science…

And…we spoke a bit about secondary schools…what kind of school would you like Tomek to go? What would be the ideal?

Here children go to school when they are still relatively young, they are 11 so they are still developing and interests can change so it would have to be a school, which gives him good academic education and allow him to keep his options open. So if he realises it is not really for him he can drop into more vocational education. But I would like him to follow the academic route.

So why would you like him to follow this academic route as opposed to the vocational?

Because I ….see the education as a value in itself and also having education gives you more flexibility and the modern life is all about flexibility because we are likely to change our occupation several times in our life and it is easier sometimes to acquire this academic education earlier on rather than later on in your life. It is not necessary but often easier to do it… hmm so the better academic and broader academic education he has got, more flexibility and more choice… I always feel you can always drop down to the more vocational education if you find it is not for you.

The training is much shorter…

Yes, the training is much shorter…but it is more difficult once you choose vocational route to go back to the academic because often you are not with people who give you this kind of motivation.

Although here it is also possible…

Yes, it is possible…I am flexible in the way that I don't need to see him achieving a high ranking banking career; I am not this kind of person who thinks that being in a rat race, in high power occupation is the best thing for him. He may want to have a less demanding profession, he actually might be happier in a less demanding profession but I would like him to have a profession.

So what would you see as a success for Tomek?

In life or education?

In life…?

If he manages to have a good life balance - that I would regard as a success, if he has a successful family life, a good broad education so he has a lot of interests and a job, which gives him secure income and he enjoys, then I would regard it as a success and that job not necessarily has to be in the city, high-power job…it might be a successful plumbing business...I would see it as a success as well.

Is it plumbing because they take a lot of money from you?

(laughing) You know …having a job security and satisfying sort of career and being in control, not feeling that others are in control of you but feeling that you got some say and control…if he could trade and have an academic career, you know… if he can be good with his hands you know…like a good electrician and have an academic career, that would be perfect for me. In Poland lots of people do it, they would have completed their study and they would come to England to work as successful builders, they suddenly discover they can do everything...they can do your boiler. Also you find that someone...you can communicate, relate well, you can easily recognise that someone has got some education and they also do your electric work and painting and this and that…

And for smaller money…

And for smaller money…I would even employ cleaners, I used to employ cleaners…they would be people from Poland or Hungary who have some education and I had some English people apply for the job and when I heard her accent…(laughing) and I tried to meet up with her and she did not turned up for the appointment and she rang up three days later and did not even say sorry so I said…I don't even want to know about…you know the way somebody communicates on the phone.

Would you ever consider employing an English person because it would never even…you know… go through my mind? You know whenever I need someone I have a network of Poles…

No, no …but I advertised.

Oh, you advertised?! Do you have any domestic help now?

No because I am not working so I can't justify it.

Hmm, talking about cleaners…L. is so sceptical about… obviously because of his values he does not want to have anybody…

No, honestly if two of you are working I just don't see any other way …you need time with your children so things like cleaning, ironing, shopping, you can get other people to do the job and then it frees you out to have time with the kids which is the most important…

Now a bit more philosophical questions…about meanings of education…how important for you is education and schooling

Well, it is extremely important, I place a great value on it, it is not only for getting a job but also to relate to other people, it puts you immediately in a different status group… it is not so much status but allows you to relate to kind of people I also respect and value and you know, it is being able to exchange my views with other people, share my opinions. It is also important to make sense of information around you …you know …and to be able to have your own opinion and have some sort of background to be able to relate to it as well, and it is also interest; I have an interest in science and I would like Tomek to share my interest…

Do you have a university degree?

Yes, in chemistry…

Did you do it in Poland?

Yes, in Warsaw

Really? OK, and you always had this kind of scientific interests?

Yes and also in arts as well so I would like Tomek to be interested in arts as well.

That is why I was surprised…because I always thought of you as a humanist more than anything else…

Yes, so you know I want him to have good understanding of what goes on around him; I remember…when I started to work in England and I was with very educated people, everyone around had a degree but even so I remember someone…I was going to go to Turkey, to Istanbul and somebody made a joke 'oh, you are going to visit Byzantium' and then someone else said 'what is Byzantium?' I found it very embarrassing and I would not like my son to be …that is the kind of thing that you expect all educated people to know but you find…I find here in England people specialise so quickly that people who go the scientific…you know they would know very little of history or geography and like for instance Razi, who has a degree in international affairs and history, he would know very little about science. He is not even interested. I am so pleased that Tomek is showing so much interest and I hope he is going to develop this and for me...if he is a person who is ignorant towards knowledge and general knowledge about the world around him…I would regard that almost as a personal disaster.

Yes, however I must admit that until I started travelling I was quite ignorant about the knowledge about the world…I would not be able to locate and name the capital of Guatemala…which is…I think I learnt them through my interests, travelling but not at school…

But that is why I am saying that not all education you must derive from school…that is why I would like to have fewer hours at school (laughs) and more time for children at home to pursue their own interest as well because most of the education you actually get is from reading and outside your interest. I don't see the modern education being about cramming just a lot of facts, knowledge into your head; it is very much about independent thinking and problem solving and learning to …to…hmm you know to influence other people about your values…you know in the workspace a lot is about influencing others and about being able to pass your ideas to others and school should be able to provide that sort of development as well…a lot of soft skills…not just skills which can be tested by examinations so it worries me that it is very much examination driven and not education in the broader sense.

I think the problem is that this is a kind of tacit knowledge, values which is very difficult to pass on to children, it is much easier to teach them to write and read and this kind of critical understanding and being flexible is very difficult to teach…

It is also because it cannot be measured easily so children…teachers…it is the problem about targets driven education …because the things cannot be measured so teachers do not focus on it, they are not expected to deliver it and there is a lot of…too much emphasis on exams and too much emphasis on targets…I think it is actually very damaging and can turn children away from education…you know it is about developing their curiosity and wanting to pursue their own interests.

Isn't it also about over-ambitious parents?

Yes, I see it in myself a little bit I am kind of thinking I am not like that but …I am not pushing him to do academically but I am pushing him to do physical things …I would push him to learn skiing, riding the bike without stabilisers, but it is good for him so if parents believe something is good for them they would tend to…but I think that is what active parenting is about …try to expand the boundaries, show them a lot of different aspects, then they can choose…he was reluctant to go on the bike and learn to cycle and he was really pushed but now when he learnt he is really enthusiastic and he thinks it is a fantastic thing…don't give up the things before you know them.

Good attitude I think…I would like to ask you, although it is coming up throughout the whole interview…what is the most crucial thing you would like to transmit to Tomek, to teach him as a parent?

I think love of learning, love of knowledge but also to be able to overcome the difficulties in learning, to be persistent in his pursuits and not to be easily discouraged by initial failures… I think it is a very important quality in education because you need to learn to overcome difficulties and learn to be self-reliant and to motivate yourself…let's say to complete an exam and you can achieve it by doing for instance sports; sports is a very good education how you cannot do something and then by following the instructions you learn it; you get better at it, it happens very quickly and it is very visual.

…and what would be the last thing that you would like your child to become?

A drag addict (laughs), yes…seeing my child as a failure and it is very subjective but he himself thinking about himself as if he failed and you know…he can be very successful but he things himself that he failed - that I

would not want to happen, you know...feeling useless, not being respected …that is what would worry me.

I would like to talk now a bit about social status…in terms of social class where would you classify yourself?

(smiles) As a middle class.

Would you?

Yes

Why?

Because of the education and certain material status, because of the type of work you are doing, because of the education…

Do you think that the concept of class was an important issue back at home?

I think here it is more important…there were not such strong divisions between working class…people actually would not even call themselves middle class, because middle class implies something higher than working class ..There would be more of a working class and office workers… this kind of divisions.

How does that sound in Polish (translates into)?

Hmm…pracownicy umyslowi i robotnicy? There would be...there were skilled workers who would be well educated and who would mix …their children would mix well with the middle class children as well …you know you would not have this sort of separation, you would live in one block of flats, the same communities, there would be very mixed communities, obviously now it is a bit different but that would be from my upbringing and obviously the status of working class was always sort of artificially elevated because of the ideology of the country.

Do you think this mixing worked well?

I think it did but I also think it was because of the specifics of a lot of working class Poland and also as the state sponsored their education as well they were encouraged to take part in activities traditionally considered middle class activities like going to the cinema, to the opera, to the theatre and thus reading books, poetry and going to the library and therefore you would find a lot of educated, broadminded working class people and there is also…financially there would be very little difference as well…sometimes they would have higher income than office workers in Poland.

You said that in Poland children of different backgrounds they would mix pretty well…you actually said that better than here. Does it mean that here there is a certain tension?

I would not say a tension but I would say there is a big gap in values, in outlook, in interests, in income, in the way you spend free time, in your expectations, in the use of language between the classes and you can almost…sort of …immediately tell.

Do you think it also manifest itself among children?

Yes, it does…not in the way you earn your living …because actually my friends…you know the people I am friendly with, her husband is actually a painter and decorator but saying that he has got a degree in arts. Ok, he earns his living by doing physical work but his income bracket, his education, his outlook, his interests are similar to mine …so you know you would not regard him as a working class in such a way, he is a tradesman.

So it is not the matter of a profession?

No, it is the matter how you spend your money, what you do with your money, how you spend free time, what is your general education…do you like reading books, do you go to the library, do you do any cultural pursuits and a language - how do you express yourself…

So do you think that working class spends money in a different way? How would they spend the money? Sorry for such a specific question but I just want to know how you imagine that…

It is very difficult because you obviously classify people...but you have got this image maybe of working class having less money and then secondly they would probably… (long silence)…I would think they would spend less money on maybe cultural things…that maybe the only difference or maybe it is only about spending their time, they would be less likely to visit a library.

So do you think that people from other 'social strata' have it different from you?

I don't understand…

You know …are there any differences between you and working class here, you already said they have less money…in what sense their life is different?

I think I have this image of working class people watching TV a lot and eating very bad food (laughing) and going to football matches and obviously you can question it and say middle classes would also eat bad food …but that is the kind of image I have…and using a very bad language maybe swearing…that is that sort of perception..

So it means you eat good food…

Sort of trying to…maybe (they are) appreciating other cultures less, maybe having less knowledge about other nations, other cultures, maybe have more narrow minded views, reading different papers, believing what papers tell them…in this way they would be different…

And the area where you live…how would you describe it?

A middle class area.

Why?

Because the majority of the people would be owner-occupiers, they would probably have white collar jobs…

So there are no estates here?

Further up there is a small estate but most are houses.

So people from there are different?

I don't know them.

You don't know them? Why not? Is it far?

I don't mix with them.

Why not?

There is nothing that would put me in touch with them, I would only relate to people on the surrounding streets.

Don't they have children in Tomek's school?

Eh, yes …some…but maybe not in his class, maybe if my child was friendly...well I am wrong, my child is friendly with children who live in council flats and their parents are not working but I don't talk to them (laughs).

You don't talk to them?

No I am joking, my child is friendly with them, I am sort of friendly but I find it a little bit difficult to relate because the mum is a bit of an alcoholic and she was drunk a few times picking up her child. You know I am willing to be friendly …but I don't think I can relate so well.

What about your education in Poland?

My primary school was a middle size school, relatively well run, children from that school…my class did well, they all went…no I am wrong, yeah…there were big differences in primary school, say, the majority of children would be from families which would be relatively well educated and there were few children who considered to be a bit different but they dropped out.

Did they?

They either went to another class because in Poland it was …streaming was even more noticeable then in England and you get a different class, here maybe you get a different table so there is a more fluid way of children migrating from group to group but in Poland some children were moved to the class which was for weaker children or they would not pass to the next year so that is why they would drop out so you end up with a group of children of similar ability. Most kids would have gone to higher education from this primary class and from my secondary I think 95 percent went into higher education.

So how was your secondary school?

Quite an elitist school…

Was it 'liceum'?

Yes…

Was it in your place?

No I had to travel to Warsaw…we had an entry exam so you had to achieve certain standard on the entry exam to actually be accepted. It was a good school …

What school was it?

H.

Aha, it was considered a very good school. Do you know Z.?

Yeah…

Yes, I was in Z.

Yes, that was a good school as well…

I did not like it.

Why not?

Well, it was very strict… (hesitation)…I needed something else in my life.

I found it in my school as well…I found it was very snobbish, very conservative, very elitist, very memory based, overloading us with facts, very repetitive, with children just groomed by their parents that they have to go to university, get a good job but no interests outside; just interested in clothes, showing off. I did not find it a very stimulating environment. I would not like Tomek to go to such school…very little of modern education like project…problem solving so it was a bit of disappointment. So going to university was a big eye opener…you had to structure your own day.

How obvious was for you going to university?

In the environment I was it seemed to be quite obvious, in my primary and secondary school it seemed quite obvious …if you don't you are almost out and then there were the others that you don't know much about their life…but you felt everybody was going to university. In the beginning I went to an Art School but I decided it was not for me because it was too much into art and I felt I was losing on more scientific subjects and I wanted to develop more in science and maybe it was because I was practical and I wanted a concrete job, like being an artist I did not feel I could support myself. I feel the financial aspects of education were very strong in me because I wanted to have a good profession and good money and that is why I decided to go to the school which was considered a good school.

Where do you think your support for Tomek's education comes from?

It comes from the belief that I think we should provide opportunities for our children for the best possible education and support them in it. I want to create a drive in Tomek that he will be pushing himself to do whatever he likes and not against his interests.

I will change the topic now. You said before there are only about 30 percent of native English parents in Tomek's school…

Maybe even less, strictly speaking it is less, there are very very few …maybe only 20 percent out of 30 children maybe 8.

Are you friends with them?

Yes, yes…one of them is a very close friend, she is very English (laughs) so she is a close friend.

So what kind of interaction would you have?

Oh, she would come to my house for tea, we would meet up for a chat in a coffee shop, we have a lot of similar views, on education, on things, you know…liking similar things, spending time in a similar way, we are both interested in arts and in sports and working with your children to develop them.

How would you describe the social background of the parents in Tomek's school?

Very mixed, maybe two thirds or half will be middle class, maybe other not but you don't see it. You see…you have parents who are refugees or ethnic minorities and by that …it means they will be very separate to the rest of the group…like this boy who is Ethiopian and his Mum is all veiled up, she does not talk to anybody, she speaks very little English and there is another group of parents…I think Albanian…again I don't think they mix with others so much. You see I am struggling because I tend to socialise more with the parents of boys…I find that in this particular school there will be extremes; there would be people who are like international elite, you know…like the father would be a professor, the mother would be a writer, then son of the diplomats and then others...like the mother would have a PhD in Psychology and the father his own business and then you have got people who are refugees from Ethiopia…

I am fascinated because I would not be able to tell you anything…

Really? But you see I only know about the boys…there is this huge group of girls among who I only know middle class parents. There are others but I don't know anything about them…it is just terrible but I don't know…

Why don't you know them?

Because I don't mix with them.

Why not?

Because…most parents I know are from the Nursery…that is the time when I developed the friendships so because they live nearby…so I find it is easier to talk to the people I already know…you know if they would come to me…a lot of like …there is a lot of black girls (whispering)…Ok it is confidential so I can say whatever I want…A lot of black girls in his class. I don't know I just don't think they are the kind of people I would relate to. They would come and talk to me but there is very little time when we are collecting and dropping children. There is one person I developed more relationship…she has got a boy as well and I want Tomek to be friends with her boy so I began to talk to her but again she is…her husband is a diplomat...it is a Muslim family, she is some sort of mix and he is some sort of Zimbabwean – Arab mix and she is French and maybe some other mix but she is very nice and…

What do you mean 'but'?

Pardon? But she is very nice…No, no…she is mixed, she is Muslim, she is very nice and you know I was talking because of the middle class…you know they have similar values and I do not notice the fact so much that they

are Muslim though they have slightly different values here…it strikes me when we go to the pub – they will not drink…

Does religion or spirituality plays any role in your life?

Hmmm…not at all but I would like…it would be good for children to have this aspect of the life developed so I would like to take Tomek to church a little bit more so that he is aware and maybe it will appeal to him so I don't want to close this route to him.

So you don't go to church?

No, but I would do it more for him…

Why would you do it for him?

Because it is part of his cultural heritage from Poland where Catholicism is very important and when we used to go to Poland for Easter we would go to church because it is part of this upbringing. I was brought up as a catholic. My husband is half Muslim, half Church of England being an atheist as well so it gives a bit of difficulty how we want our child to…

Ok, I think we covered a lot of issues in this interview, thank you so much…

Appendix IX: Excerpts from Field Notes

Excerpts from Field Notes

Anna (1, casual jobs, B)

I could write a piece of work about creation of *racial stereotypes* and formation of racism based on my interviews, generalising and stereotyping certain groups particularly black people as Anna lives in X.

Seemingly undemanding mother who is not in any way *structuring her daughters' future*, her life seems highly *precarious.*

She had pretty testing experiences and dark and bleak past – many hints tell me she is not telling me all; for example that she does come from a pathological (alcoholic) family, or that she has possibly been working as sex worker, her background situation is transparent to me but it is not expressed blatantly by her, which makes it harder for me to analyse her case and be explicit about her social /economic positioning in my research.

A mother that has rarely been a focus of my former research – disadvantaged, with substantial experiences, single, having children in deprived and academically mediocre school, following her Polish way but unconsciously, *no purposeful, intentional shaping of her or her girls future*, an eye – opener for me, she has no persistence in whatever she takes up and seems to quit things

Suburban, almost rural area of London, very tranquil and laidback, throughout the whole interview the mother shouts at girls to be quiet, to shut up otherwise they will be smacked, aggressive tone which sharply contrasts with the tone of voice she uses in a conversation with me

It is very difficult to analyse summary of interviews and notes as notes usually contain content of the interview and by now I realise my analysis are more likely to be about what is said between lines or what is not said and not necessarily the straightforward record of mothers' accounts.

Renata (2, not in paid work, C)

They live in a suburb of south east London, almost rural environment, renting from a private sector a 3 bedroom flat in a house, her son attends a local state school where the mother works as a volunteer, she is waiting for a place in a Catholic school, plans to do a PGCE course and to get a QTS, she looks after a

child of a friend for 2 hours a day, otherwise she calls herself ‘a house wife for a while’, she is happy with this role, partner (who is not the father of Romek - Renata separated in Poland – still in the middle of a divorce process) lives with them, he works installing lifts.

She makes an impression of a *proactive, dynamic* and optimistic person who has been in the UK for only 2-3 months, she feels *all the opportunities are in front* of her and seems to *throw herself into them without much constraint*, this model of the mother somehow reminds me the mothers I interviewed for my dissertation – the type of *open doors and limitless possibilities,* the meritocratic paradise – that is *relational with their status in Poland*… at certain point I claimed that yes, opportunities are limitless as compared with the ‘corrupted Poland’ but there is also the element of not having the doors closed and chances were equal for everybody…there was a theoretical possibility of transcending their social realm, here in the UK there is a practical opportunity and thus must be grabbed.

first stage – theoretical opportunity (acquired in Poland)

next stage – applying the theory in practice as it is becoming a feasible reality

I feel that Renata is a showcase for this theory

Ada (4, media researcher, C, 1st int.)

I met this participant through the internet forum.

This interview has been carried out a few months after the mother settled in the UK and although her child is still young I have decided to include her with the hope of doing a panel one. It would be interesting (and I believe viable) to speak to the mother in 2-3 years’ time. Many questions were skipped because they are not necessarily relevant at this stage of her stay in the UK – Adam has just started a reception class and the mother’s insights, however in-depth because of her experience in Pl are still superficial in regard with the UK system.

She seems the type of mother who will not give up her professional ambitions and indeed she will follow up her dreams after her children reach the suitable age; her standpoint is quite clear about it. Adam is attending a very poor in terms of academic standards school, the mum is rather *disillusioned about the*

bad fame but at the same time cannot see the unsatisfactory standards when in direct contact with the school, on the contrary she is *happy what is being offered* to her with a few exceptions.

She has a strong stance on religion and is among the very few mothers who despise any form of religious, particularly Catholic indoctrination and is very reluctant to send K to such school – v. limited choice – it throws some light on the question whether school in the UK have the right to stand as religious institution…

The interview took place in her little garden and Adam, an extremely bright and talkative 4 year old was present. He often joined the conversation and gave some valuable additions to this interview, he also often interrupted and the interview lacks some continuity – that is why it will be worth for me to carry out one in the future.

Kamila (4, not in paid work, B)

She lives in north London where there is a big concentration of Poles, in her child's class there are several (10-12) Polish children and the child *mostly has Polish friends*, they have been here for about four years and she managed to make some international friends but she is very *critical of anything that is English* – culture, bad behaviour, food, young people, housing. She has several foreign friends.

Kamila represents a type of a Polish person who has very *traditional values* and she puts it *'I was brought up in this way and some things are for her impossible to jump over'*. She is deeply shocked by the arrogance of English young people and fears about her child's education in the UK, she has some comparison with the neighbouring leafy suburb of London where all seems more safe, clean and calm but as it looks she does not go far beyond her deprived greatly multicultural area where she lives. Coming back I experienced a police action where they were trying to kerb crime in the area and frankly it all looked rather threatening to me – somehow it confirmed the fears and concerns of the mother.

She is religious but does not go to church, only for special occasions. The daughter was present at the interview as it was half term and the child well-mannered and polite was able to be busy and active on her own for the length of the whole interview.

The mum dreams about leaving UK and London as she detest anything what is here, she wants to move to Canada but her partner is happy here and she is suffering, she is determined to finish her course and look for a job according to her qualifications but she does not see her future here in the UK. She *continues to live her Polish reality* with some extra additions of a foreign flavour. The girl is doing *very well at school* as the mother claims and she also affirms *most Polish children at school do well*. *Regularly works with the girl on her academic achievement, also teaches her to read and write in Polish.*

Urszula (2, waitress in pub, B)

Urszula is a typical model of a Polish immigrant as presented in media trying to paint a balanced picture of Polish immigration – they came here due to bleak market prospects in PL, the partner was not paid on time, they were in debts. They have decided to try to rebuild their life in a new country and the partner got a job in the UK as a welder, she joined him with her at the time 8 year old son a year later. They are renting a poorly maintained small 1bed flat in an *area characterised by 'temporality'* where people come and go. She works in a pub's kitchen and constitutes an asset for the business according to her boss; she earns a low salary of £10-12K per year for working 38 hours a week, including Sundays. The husbands wage is also close to the minimum pay. Her son joined a Catholic primary school where *he does very well, adjusted to the new reality fast*, learnt English fast and *came to the UK with a very good foundation knowledge of maths and science*. The parents work hard to offer the son a better prospects in the UK – they provided Alek with a year lasting expensive *private tuition* so that he could catch up with his English*, she worked with him after school*, also for her own benefit as she claims. The son, thanks to mother's efforts and a good will of the son's school headmistress got a place in a desired Catholic school. He also won a prize in an interschool north London competition in writing poetry (info from forum) and his poem will be published.

They are *very satisfied with their situation in the UK* and plan to settle here, they do have higher aspirations in terms of professions and their economic situation but accept the temporary fate of a migrant trying to succeed in a new country.

Interestingly Urszula has *no intentions to challenge the wealth and status disparities* in the UK and consciously does not question the status quo but *plans to move up step by step*. She situates herself among the 'lower than medium' class but is not blaming any power structures for this state of affairs.

This interview has brought a lot of memories of my early days in London – being pregnant and having the state of insecurity of being evicted from a damp studio a few doors away from where Urszula lives at present, feeling utterly isolated (where my partner worked from 7am to 9pm with an awkward rota) and inappropriate in the place where all come to earn some money to make another journey around the world. There was no family, relatives or friends around. This wasn't precisely what I would experience in Poland or how other native families in London are likely to experience their motherhoods. Urszula seems to cope with this *inadequacy (for instance the fact that her husband works on Sat and she works on Sunday*) well and makes all efforts to lead a 'normal' family life. She is highlighting the fact that she cannot send Alek to a play scheme due to high fees but *accepts the fact as a norm for a person with a low income.*

Urszula has been bringing up her son in the reality of post-communist Polish small town and has experienced hardship and all what the *transition phase brought to part of the society who become impoverished at the expense of others. She carries this notion in the UK (of legitimate social divisions) but sees UK as a meritocratic society where if not her and the partner, her son will succeed.*

Appendix X: General Information on Education in Poland

General information on education in Poland[82]

Types of school (after 2009 educational reform)

Following an educational reform in 2009 there are following types of schools in Poland:

- 4 - year - pre-school provision compulsory from the age of 5 (last year is called 'preschool preparation' or colloquially 'reception')
- 6 - year primary school (start at the age of 6[83])
- 3 - year gymnasium (lower secondary)

Choice of post-gymnasium schools: (upper secondary)

- 3 – year lyceum (*Liceum Ogolnoksztalcace*) (general or specialized) (ending with examination of maturity 'MATURA')
- 4 – year technical secondary school (*Technikum*) (ending with examination of maturity 'MATURA')
- 2 or 3 year vocational school (*Zasadnicza Szkola Zawodowa*)

The primary school is divided into two stages:

- I – grade 1, 2, 3 (it is called integrated teaching and its aim is to assure transition between pre-school to school education)
- II – grade 4, 5, 6 (from Y 4 children follow subjects listed in the timetable: Polish, history and civics, modern foreign language, mathematics, natural science, music, art, technology, computer sciences, PE, religion or ethics)

Within the subject curriculum, other educational areas are taught, that is: health, ecological and media education, education for society, family life, cultural heritage and civic education.

The gymnasium is for pupils between 13 and 16 and provides education by subjects at a wide range but at a basic level. Gymnasium helps individuals to identify their interests and prepares them to make rational professional choices for their future.

Every child must be enrolled in a school (as of 2009, the school does not need to be a public school). Homeschooled children are required to pass annual exams covering material in school curriculum, and failure on an exam automatically terminates the homeschooling permit.

[82] after Lopez Rodriguez et al., 2010a; revised and amended in November 2015 by the author

[83] following the 2009 educational reform children in Poland start school at 6. In 2011, the new reforms implemented lowering of the starting age of compulsory schooling (pre-school) to the age of **five** and in 2014 introduced lowering of the starting age of compulsory schooling (primary school) to the age of **six**.

Certificates

Every year children obtain a certificate of completion of a specific year, in Stage I it is accompanied by descriptive reports and in stage II by grades. On leaving primary school children receive a certificate of completion of primary school (*Swiadectwo Ukonczenia Szkoly Podstawowej*) and the Gymnasium leaving certificate is called *Swiadectwo Ukonczenia Gimnazjum*.

Catholic Church and Schooling

About 95% of Poles are Roman Catholic. Although in cities many people do not regularly practice their religion, Catholicism is an important facet of being Polish. The Catholic Church has currently its own school system but it is only a small fraction of all schools. Religion was introduced as a subject into the public school curriculum - families can choose religion or ethics or both but they are not compulsory subjects.

Assessment

In Poland children are graded with marks from 1 to 6 where 6 is outstanding and 1 unsatisfactory. Usually there is no written report for children in KS2 or 3 and at the end of each year children are given certificates with marks for each subject. There is no any official testing between KS1 and KS2 but pupils have frequent, ongoing internal tests directed by subject teachers to make sure they learn on day-to-day basis. Such tests (*kartkowka*) can last as little as 10 minutes or can be more extensive, lasting 45 minutes (*klasowka*). At the end of Y6 children take an official test with its results being significant for their future educational paths.

Extracurricular activities

In Poland children often attend after-school classes and clubs (*swietlica*) where they can learn photography, music, crafts, sports, ICT or languages. Such provision varies from school to school and currently is not consistent and uniform. After-school interest subject clubs are also very popular (such as history, computing, environmental studies, Polish language etc). Children who stay behind in their learning are offered booster classes to catch up.

Miscellaneous

Uniforms – a type of overall put over casual clothes were introduced in Poland in 2007 but there is no any strict dress code as it is present in many English schools.

Apart from children carrying their books and workbooks home, which facilitates carers following program and helping children with homework and class work, planners are a part of Polish pupils' life. Parents are aware of their children's day-to-day duties and subjects. As of 2014 there is one integrated book, which children follow in the early stages of primary school (there are plans to extend this provision to classes 1-3).

Schools in Poland start at 8am but children may have their classes at different shifts, depending on their timetable. They usually have between five and seven 45 minutes sessions divided by short (10 min) or longer (30 min) breaks. Children finish school at different times depending on shifts but the latest at 4pm. They can start as late as 12pm. Children have a choice of hot lunch or their own packed lunch. There is always hot lunch provided on the premises. There is no choice as a rule and children eat 2 dishes: soup and main course consisting of staple, meat variety and greens. They normally drink compote to accompany their lunch, which is made of various types of fruit boiled with water. This is considered as dessert.

New arrivals

Children arriving to British schools are of a very heterogeneous background in terms of education. There are migrants with little education, vocational qualifications and also university graduates. In the early stages of their settlement they all seem to send their children to schools of a similar profile re objectified quality and status. There is a group of Polish Roma children joining British schools and their needs may be different to those of ethnic Poles.

Teaching

From Y4 there is a distinct teacher for each subject area but already in KS1 there may be specialist teachers for subjects such as PE, Art or Music.

The ratio of teacher to pupil in primary school is 1:24 but in integrational classes this ratio is 1 to 20 with a supplementary, supporting teacher (with teaching qualifications) present. Teaching of children (up to 5) with learning difficulties or disabilities takes place in the classroom. Only some schools have the status of 'schools with some integrational classes'.

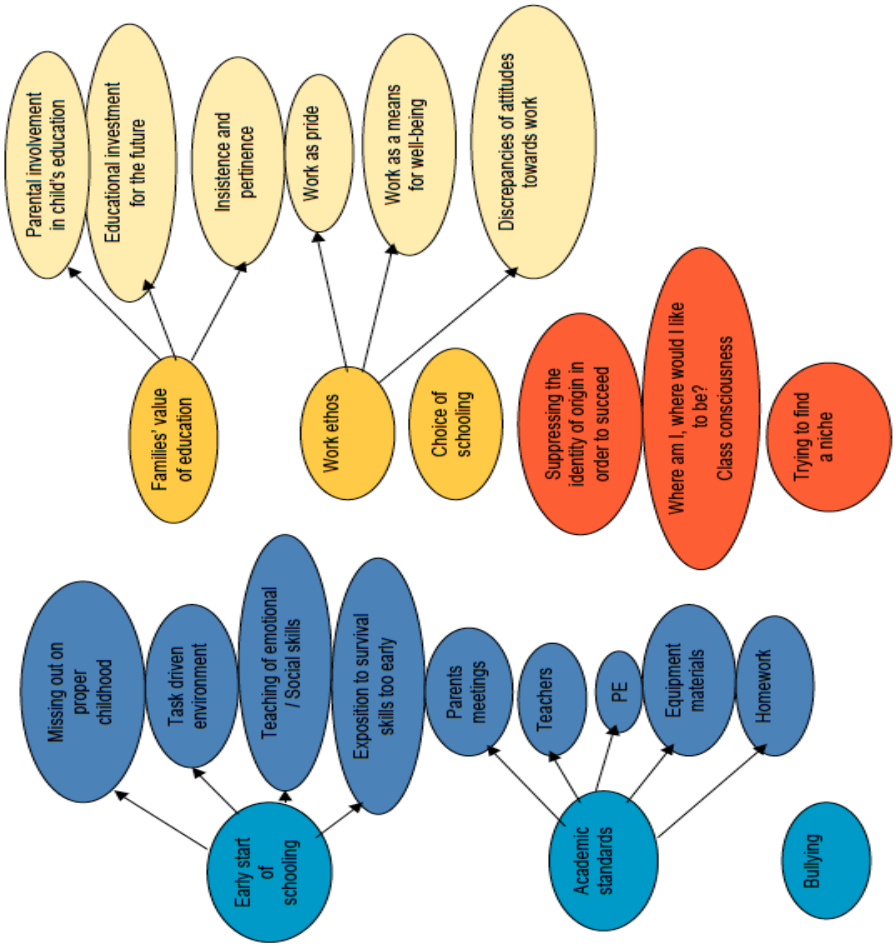
Curriculum is more centralized but also more static as compared with the ever-changing English curriculum. However this is also changing in contemporary Poland and an increased demand for transferable skills (such as reading comprehension or research skills) has been noted and is being taken into account in educational planning.

There is a greater emphasis placed in the Polish educational system on ecological issues and the culture and traditions of the country. Pupils are aware of the impact of humans on their environment. This is often reflected in the curriculum as they celebrate festivities and traditions, with less concern for what is being missed.

Appendix XI: Diagrams Showing Processes of Data Analysis

Task driven environment
Insistence and pertinence
Choice of schooling
Early start of schooling
PE
Where am I, where would I like to be?
Class consciousness
Academic standards
Bullying
Suppressing the identity of origin in order to succeed
Equipment Materials
Teaching of emotional / Social skills
Parental involvement in child's education
Trying to find a niche
Parents meetings
Families' value of education
Work as a means for well-being
Homework
Discrepancies of attitudes towards work
Teachers
Work ethos
Exposition to survival skills too early
Work as pride
Educational investment for the future
Missing out on proper childhood

Trying to find a niche
Work as a means for well-being
Teachers
Task driven environment
Missing out on proper childhood
Insistence and pertinence
Parents meetings
Teaching of emotional / Social skills
Work as pride
Work ethos
Equipment Materials
Bullying
Homework
Educational investment for the future
Early start of schooling
Where am I, where would I like to be? ...
Parental involvement in child's education
Families' value of education
Exposition to survival skills too early
Choice of schooling
Academic standards
Suppressing the identity of origin in order to succeed
Discrepancies of attitudes Towards work
PE


Parental involvement in child's education
Educational investment for the future
Insistence and pertinence
Work as pride
Work as a means for well-being
Discrepancies of attitudes towards work
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Parents meetings
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PE
Equipment materials
Homework
Early start of schooling
Academic standards
Bullying

Early start of schooling
Academic standards
Bullying
Families' value of education
Work ethos
Choice of schooling
Suppressing the identity of origin in order to succeed
Where am I, where would I like to be?
Class consciousness
Trying to find a niche
Encounters and insights
Strategies and capital
Identity and integration

Appendix XII: Abstract in Polish

Abstract in Polish

Kapitał, tożsamość i strategie; perspektywy polskich matek - migrantek w Wielkiej Brytanii na edukację i przyszłość ich dzieci.

Edukacja dzieci jest jednym z głównych problemów w dziedzinie migracji rodzin. Nagły wzrost polskiej migracji do Wielkiej Brytanii po 2004 roku spowodował zwiększenie się liczby dzieci w szkołach w Wielkiej Brytanii. Razem z nimi w szkołach pojawiła się specyficzna problematyka związana z różnicami systemów oświaty w Polsce i w Wielkiej Brytanii, z odmiennymi doświadczeniami szkolnictwa polskich rodziców a w konsekwencji z ich odmiennymi oczekiwaniami. Konsekwentnie, przedmiotem badań są wyłaniające się wzory sposobów postrzegania przez polskie matki relacji pomiędzy etosem ich domu a kulturą szkoły ich dzieci, oraz pomiędzy domem i etosem sąsiedztwa w którym zamieszkują. Poprzez wyeksponowanie procesu adaptacji Polskich dzieci w angielskich szkołach z perspektywy ich matek, badam transformacje tożsamości matek oraz strategie jakie stosują w negocjacjach pomiędzy dobrem i szansami edukacyjnymi dzieci a, niełatwym, wkraczaniem w tym celu w nieznane relacje oraz przestrzenie.

Poprzez wgłębienie się w doświadczenia moich respondentów możliwe było zbadanie jak rożne formy kapitału wpływają na integracje Polaków w Wielkiej Brytanii i jak odbywa się tworzenie kapitału w warunkach migracyjnych. Badania oparte na 50 wywiadach pogłębionych, przeprowadzonych głównie w Londynie, opisują społeczne i psychologiczne procesy które towarzyszą matkom w ich integracji do społeczeństwa brytyjskiego.

Przedmiotem mojej pracy jest także udokumentowanie i wyjaśnienie, w jaki sposób aspiracje i przedsięwzięcia matek-migrantek, w zależności od rodzicielskiej, samo-przypisanej tożsamości klasowej, kształtują przyszłość ich dzieci, i jak poszczególne rodziny różnią się w kapitalizowaniu merytokratycznych szans, jakie oferuje im nowy kraj. W literaturze podkreślane są często problemy deprawacji społecznej w śródmiejskich szkołach, natomiast nieliczne studia rozważają strategie Polskich rodzin (i innych mniejszości etnicznych) znajdujących się w takim środowisku. Wstępnie sugeruję ze kapitał, który Polskie matki posiadają (jako dziedzictwo z Polski) oraz odpowiednio ‘rozlokowują’, powoduje że postrzegają one angielski system oświatowy w określonym świetle i że tenże kapitał może ułatwić pomyślne funkcjonowanie ich dzieci w sferze szkolnictwa w Wielkiej Brytanii.

Słowa kluczowe: kapitał, dzieci, klasa społeczna, edukacja, habitus, tożsamość, integracja, liminalność, Londyn, migrant, merytokracja, matki, szanse życiowe, Polki, szkoły, strategie, transformacja, transgresja, Wielka Brytania

Appendix XIII: Case Studies

Case Study 1: Alina - experiences, fears, compliance

Alina (4, clinical psychologist, B) lives on a relatively disadvantaged council housing estate and displays clear discomfort about her residential status but has little financial scope to change it. On many occasions during the interview she expressed how different she felt from other parents of her son's Marek friends or her colleagues (she works as a clinical psychologist). Living in social housing prevents her from inviting Marek's friends or her work colleagues home as she is aware of the stigma associated with her residential status. She described an incident that involved a youth living in her neighbourhood.

> My partner was attacked physically by two teenagers, he was hit with a brick on his head and it was our neighbour who saved his life when she found him in a paddle of blood. It happened here in our block. It was mostly white working class boys. I know some of them because some live around here. I have seen one of the mothers of those teenagers in many arguments; one day she was screaming, shouting and hitting others. It is clear she is psychologically unstable. One day I looked out of the window because there was a loud scream - she was having arguments with her neighbours. I wouldn't feel comfortable to approach her under any circumstances. One of the offenders was her son. We considered taking it further after coming back from our holidays but we were basically afraid, even if the guy was charged he has a lot of friends and I was afraid they would attack us. I was also worried about my son and myself. We were even considering moving out of the area but then it was winter so the guys were not hanging about in the streets and everything calmed down.

Alina expresses concerns about bringing up her growing son in the neighbourhood and her observations and fears trigger a determination to move out of the area for the sake of Marek's future.

> Looking at our future, at the incident with my husband, seeing these young people smoking hash all the time because they have nothing else to do, I just want to move out of here. I don't want Marek to become one of them and I know that if I let go now, it might happen. This is my main reason for my desire to move out of here - the role models for Marek.

Yet, the financial situation (Alina's partner does not have paid work and looks after their new born baby) prevents her from relocating to a more tolerable area. She gradually begins to accommodate, justify and come to terms with living in the rejected milieu and learns to fit in and function in them by the denied earlier 'letting it go', which she had originally refused to contemplate:

> Up to now I didn't have to worry about Marek playing outside as there were no boys his age playing outside. But during the last few days, there were some boys so I let him out twice outside but I can see him from the window and he even invited them in to show off his snake. I just didn't have the guts to say 'no'

Case study 2; Vera, (**4, not in paid work, B) - strategizing**

Vera, who lives in a decaying high-rise block scheduled for demolition reflects upon barriers and strategies to secure a more fulfilling life for her family:

We do take girls to the museums because we do not need to pay but not theatres as we do need to pay there. Last year I was involved in Sure Start and with them we would be going to all sorts of attractions, also theatres. Now I use Sure Start but I am not involved in it. The money is always a barrier for us but I always look for things that are free or inexpensive, I talk to people and I search on the internet for all sorts of deals, so on the positive note we are not behind.

I have been unemployed for 7 years and it is so difficult to mobilise myself to do something but we, with my husband, we are so economical, we never spend money on things that we do not need. We have been several times to Legoland, having various vouchers, which I get from people I know or with Sure start. I also get tickets to Imax cinema from my friend, someone I know from the times when I was running the music group. We know how to get stuff, which would normally cost so much money. We always use the Tesco club card.

Viva also goes to a swimming club and she is progressing really well.(..) in this way they also have other friends that they can meet outside the club as well as during social events.(..) I noticed that most children here they just run around in the playground, they don't do anything in the weekends, they are there without parents. I don't let the girls to be on their own. Maybe it is to do with money? Yet we do not have much but we are simply able to organise ourselves and we know how to spend it.

(..)

I would definitely love to live somewhere else, because of the nature of this huge high rise block and also because down here there is one of the worst schools in London. In my research, which I did for my dissertation I found out

that 90% of people living in this block are actually foreigners and only 30% in those small blocks there, across the street. Basically I think if you have the means to get out of here you do everything to get out of this place and if you are a foreigner you do not have the necessary capital or don't know how to go about it. At the moment I do not have the means to get out from here but I also found out that I am one of the people who is the least happy to live in this place.

In her interview Vera constantly refers to economic limitations, which she perceives as a barrier to full participation in what living in the UK offers. Despite this hurdle the mother does not renounce and indeed applies a multitude of tactics to overcome economic constraints. To make ends meet she does extensive internet research in quest for inexpensive activities and attractions, she capitalises on her social capital, networking skills and exploits free opportunities that London provides. The economic barrier together with lack of know-how, is also the justification why the mother does not move out from the resented high rise estate. Vera copes with this shortcoming by making sure her daughters attend a Catholic school well beyond her immediate neighbourhood and are occupied by swimming competitively in order to avoid the 'not doing anything' children in the playground. As she puts it 'all their life revolves around the swimming club'.

Case study 3: Sonia's quest a for 'good' school; inequalities in the making

Sonia (4, catering manager, B) 'married into a council flat' but shortly after divorced her Irish partner. However, she stayed with her daughter in the high rise block of flats on a decaying London council estate due to be demolished in the nearest future. When her daughter Hanna was four Sonia ' applied to two schools nearby assuming that schools were all the same here' and she 'got one which was nearby'. She says 'I did check some things, they had very good Ofsted report but in reality it was very different from what I expected'. I have already described Sonia's search for an acceptable school (p. 122) and the methods she used when selecting the next school. Afterwards she heard from a customer (she works as a catering manager in premises accommodating well-known companies) about a certain school in an opulent, well-heeled area. She decided to apply to the school, which in her accounts she calls 'orange'. Intrigued by her depiction of both schools in which Hanna's new school would be called 'posh' and 'traditional', while the old 'green' school would be called a 'typical council estate school', I researched Ofsted reports of both. Below is an excerpt from the Ofsted report on Hanna's first, 'typical council estate' school:

The school works in partnership with a number of agencies and is part of the New Deal for Communities scheme. There are social and economic problems in the surrounding area. Children come from a wide variety of minority ethnic backgrounds with half the pupils being of Black African or Black Caribbean origin. Twenty eight languages are spoken in the school with Somali and Arabic the most prominent.[84] Almost half the pupils are entitled to free meals and nearly one in three has learning difficulties. (Ofsted 2009)

Sonia moved her daughter to an 'orange' school where:

A slightly lower than average proportion of pupils are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Free school meals entitlement is below average.(..)
Many go to great lengths to choose this school for their children.(..)
Many pupils come from relatively advantaged homes. (Ofsted 2006)

When in Year 2 Hanna began attending her new school, the mother learnt that Hanna was far below her expected academic level and that she urgently needed remedy 'booster' classes. The mother, with anger in her voice, reflected upon the feedback she was given in the 'green school' where Hanna attended first two years of her schooling: 'When she got the report at the end of the year everything was fine, no problems, she was basically doing fine. Reading this report you would never guess that my daughter has any problems with reading, writing and that she is behind.'

The bewildered and exasperated mother had to come to terms with the fact that her daughter has been attending a school with mediocre educational standards and that Hanna herself had been oblivious of the stark differences, which mark schools in London. Bitter, she gave an account how she dealt with this revelation:

I actually asked the teachers in the orange school: *'how come schools in London can be so different in quality*?' I am a foreigner here so I don't understand but I asked '*If you have the same curriculum, then why? Why it is so different? Why can all the kids in your school read and in the other, not reading a word in Y1*

[84] The order and phrasing were partly changed in order to maintain anonymity of the participant.

wasn't a problem.' Of course they couldn't give me any answer because they couldn't talk about their colleagues or that they have different kind of kids here. It wouldn't be possible in Poland I think; in Poland you give more attention to detail. If in Poland the teacher sees a child has a problem, they will talk to the parents right from the beginning so you can work on it.

Case study 4 - Justyna; fragility of migrant world

Justyna (1, not in paid work, C) and her husband led a relatively stable existence living in a shared house with their two children. Justyna did odd jobs and her partner worked in a company as a driver. When the family went to Poland, her partner had a car accident and as a result his left arm was paralyzed. At the same time Justyna discovered she was pregnant. Following the incident, the family's situation changed dramatically because the husband could not work and they had no rights to benefit system in the UK. At the time when our interview was taking place, they were relying on the good will of the landlord and of their friends who were emotionally and economically supporting them. Justyna told me how it affected the children:

> Before we were taking them to school by car when we had one but we had an accident and now we don't have one so we walk now, it is a 20 minute walk.
>
> At the moment the children cannot go to any after school activities while for everything we need to pay and at the moment we obviously cannot pay for anything but they understand that it is a temporary situation. When we had a car we could go somewhere and visit places now when we do not have one, we mainly stay at home. Since the accident we only go locally to the park.
>
> If we had more money, children would attend all sorts of activities, sports because they really want to do it.

Case study 5; educational legacies of communism – Lidia (4, university lecturer, B)

Lidia, contrasting her past experiences when her daughters attended schools in Poland, heavily relies on the assumptions that everyone should have free tuition and access to it. The narrative of the school needing to take more responsibility for the children's learning has been prominent not only in Lidia's account but also in other interviews. This may be interpreted as a form of social legacy of communism which promoted those values:

The education you get here in London.. I am shocked, I am devastated, I want to cry when I think about what they could be doing and what they are not. They could do gymnastics, they could play tennis, they could do acrobatics, they could learn German, French. In Poland Rena was attending German and French classes from the age of 6. It all cost pennies. Tennis and gymnastics for free. Mostly physical activities, skiing camps in Slovakia organised by the school, which again cost pennies. (1st int.)

When the opportunities are not offered within the state education, ultimately Lidia eagerly deploys capital which can help to achieve the desired status (i.e. taking up extra work, employing tutors) even if this requires substantial sacrifices:

In terms of learning languages.. I asked them what languages children learn in primary schools and they looked at me in a very strange way .. 'what am I asking – languages here start in secondary school'. So I had to pay for Mila's French classes but she didn't have the motivation to learn because nobody around was learning. I do not have any time or strength to teach them. I prefer to work extra and assure that they are taught by others. The same with instruments - no any free tuition at school. Again, it is me who has to buy instruments, pay the teachers for piano, guitar lessons so that they could do grades.(2nd int.)

Case study 6 – Lidia (4, university lecturer, B); living with and up to abuse

Lidia lived in a significantly multicultural but little socially cohesive and unprosperous pocket of south-east London with a robust white English working class contingent. Ethnic tensions, as Lidia explained to me were common and here she is recalling her experiences shortly following her move there:

A gang of English hoodies started to bang on my door and shout at us 'we don't want you here, go home'. They have stolen my car, first they started to demolish it, straight after I moved, they would break my windows, punch my tyres. I knew it was them, these are young nationalists, and some of them even have children, at the age of 20. (..) I was always passing by with my children so they could hear that we were from Poland and they knew that we lived next door. I had to call the police once, sometimes twice a month. But when they started banging on my door it was already too much. You know it stopped when I started to go around the town and take photographs of people. Now we do not have so much graffiti on our door like before, for example 'attacker will come back' or these things. Now it calmed down, they even say 'good morning' to us. I know who stole my car but I will not go deep into it. All in all I think they are greater victims of the whole thing than I am. (1st int.)

Lidia (4, university lecturer, B) – case study 7; negotiating transgression

Lidia, a lecturer at university, works predominantly among white native English colleagues. She describes her emotional sacrifices of the ambitious conquering of the unfamiliar. She senses that due to a different socialisation process she constantly breaks the rules of congruous interaction and therefore feels out of place and constantly trying to make up for her shortcomings.

> ..and I have to pretend I am English but of course I can't be English so I am trying to be more English than they are. It is a farce, more I try, more ashamed of myself I feel. I have blockades because of that, I want to say something very simple and in front of my colleagues I cannot say anything and I start stammering. There were so many situations that I don't know where to start and where to finish; I do not know what the rule of communication are, but I feel that there are because I see that if I start speaking and something is happening because by mistake I start being myself somewhere somehow… then I can see these looks. And when I try to be English, then it's even worse because then they know even sooner that it's not 'this'. (1st int.)

> I had this situation that one day my colleague asked us to present ourselves and I just came out in front of our students and told them my story how I ended up here.. what I was doing in the communist Poland and at the end I got ovations. OK it took me 10 minutes and I was first. Then after me a colleague, an English woman, said *my name is Sarah Enoch and I teach literature.* It felt like a slap on my cheek. Later I went to her and I explained that I really didn't know what the rule was and that I was sorry to put my foot in. She looked at me and said 'you don't need to apologise, it is just you'. But this was only the beginning, then there was an avalanche of such communication faux pas. (1st int.)

One of Lidia's daughters, Rena attended a, top in the rankings, grammar school with predominantly affluent white middle class population. Vincent et al. point out that with regard to school choice among black middle classes there is a choice between 'good mix' schools (usually comprehensive) and deprived of the 'good mix' schools of opportunities for educational achievement and advantage (usually private). Yet, there are trade-offs of both choices; in the former a risk of low educational standards, in the latter risks of social alienation and institutional racism (2012). Apparently Lidia chose the second option and suffered the subtle, possibly self-imposed emotional and social costs of sending Rena to a 'privileged zone':

> Rena didn't want me to be involved in her school at all. I think she was embarrassed of me. You know I was driving a cheap car and whenever she was performing she would always tell me in detail how to dress. When I was taking her to school, she would always tell me to park at a safe distance so that nobody could see my car. (2nd int.)

With time mothers usually reflect on their self–possessed and self-controlling approach and distance themselves from their self awareness and simply decide to 'be themselves'. Although keeping up appearances in theory does not preoccupy them anymore, importantly such attitudes do not always go with the praxis and they may still hold tight to trying to fit in and playing masquerades in order to maintain the public impression of wellbeing and normality. This process also has a status dimension and I will clarify this in more detail when I discuss legitimization of practices. Here Lidia decides to distance herself and become oblivious to the existing pecking orders and step down from playing the 'pretence games'. In theory, she clearly rejects the idea of social closure as unethical and inequitable and reasons that this perhaps is not an option for her daughters:

> Before I would think that it was always better for them to live in better areas, to go to better schools, to mix with people from better classes. With time I became so much more relaxed about it. I just let it go… because it cost me hysteria and neurosis when I tried to push them to do homework a few hours a day. So I am prepared for every option. We live in a multicultural area and I think they have already learnt that mixing with other cultures, being tolerant is not something they would experience among upper classes; in Cambridge or Oxford it wouldn't be a priority (2nd int.)